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Complete Book-Length Novel
of Tomorrow's Vanguard

By OSCAR J. FRIEND

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STARTLING STORIES

Vol. 4, No. 2

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September, 1940

A Complete Book-Length Scientific Fiction Novel



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THE KID



"Keep them" Lillian shouted at the giant operating the dominator (Strip XX)

The Visitor from the Crimson World Could

FROM MARS



By
**OSCAR J.
FRIEND**

*Author of "Rear of the Rocket," "The
Impossible Highway," etc.*

CHAPTER I

Publicity Staff

IN the television screens of lovers of sport in the metropolitan area appeared the playing field of Meadowbrook Polo Grounds. From the loud-speaker, his pleasantly compelling voice fairly dripping honey, came the words of the announcer:

"And that, Mr. and Mrs. America, is the present setup in the world of polo. The third shucker is about to start, so we are returning you to our sports announcer. The next voice you will hear belongs to that ace of columnists and



Perform Miracles—but They Weren't for Sale!

A Vanguard of the Future's Scientific Age

sports reporters, Mr. Louis Shayne.

"This championship match is coming to you through the courtesy of Rainbow Starbur Vitamin Pills—R.S. V.P.—that marvelous concentrate which relaxes, reposes, and replenishes your mind and body, all at the same time. Take one nutritious, iridescent pellet upon retiring, and see your dreams in technicolor. Ladies and gentlemen—Mr. Shayne!"

Louis Shayne, lean and wiry, almost angular, casually shrugged his tailored shoulders and stepped from the side of the nearby spectator box. He approached the telecaster equipment, deliberately turning his back upon the brunette beauty that was Elaine Elliot, Three Dimensional Pictures' glamour girl. There were a number of other big shots in the cinema star's company, but that didn't bother Shayne, either.

He had rubbed shoulders with the great and the near-great until all his illusions were tarnished. He had exploited so many punks and palookas on the air and in his column that he didn't believe in anything. He was bored and fed up with public glitter stuff, plant-tudious advertising, and phony bull-dups. In short, Mr. Shayne had worn a hole in his cheek, and his tongue was sore. Three Dimensional Pictures was just another exploitation.

A fat little man, Maurice Rynder, first vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures, trotted alongside the natty reporter.

"Pa-a-a-t, Shayne!" he hissed, tugging at the younger man's sleeve. "Don't forget to pour it on thick—about Elaine, you know."

"Yeah," Shayne granted laconically without looking back. "I know."

He certainly did. In the box with the star sat John Hartman, owner and publisher of the Star-Tribune Newspaper and Telecast System. Next to Hartman sat Colonel Henry Thompson, financial wizard of Wall Street, international banker, and the one man who had all ten fingers on the official pulse at Washington. There was this little blimp, Rynder, who had tagged after him, a big noise in the newly de-

veloping three-dimensional picture company.

But it was John Hartman who could successfully holler "Grog" at Shayne and get a reluctant hop. All three had money invested in Three Dimensional Pictures, but Hartman alone was Shayne's boss.

"And that makes me the goat again," Shayne observed to himself in great irony. "I hadle out a lot of baloney about Elaine Elliot, whose real name is probably Mamie Schmitz and who decan't know what it's all about, anyhow. But she's a swell looker and can memorize double talk and people will pay to see her and fight for her autograph."

SHAYNE did Miss Elaine Elliot a grave injustice, but he wasn't swayed of it. Elaine, besides being a beautiful young actress, was from Missouri and knew a lot more than any pretty girl was supposed to know. She was more sick of hokum and tinsel and publicity gags than Louis Shayne could ever hope to be. But there was a subtle difference between them. Where Shayne was cynical, Miss Elliot was blind. Where Shayne was disgusted, Miss Elliot was annoyed and alertly suspicious.

Shayne stepped in front of the telecasters and addressed the mike. As he spoke, he let his weary gaze wander over the scene before him.

"It's a beautiful day, sport fans," he said in his crisp, dry style of delivery. "There isn't a cloud in the sky—except that one gray speck directly overhead, which I mentioned before. The game at the end of the second chukker put the South American team in the lead, as I told you. That hat-trick goal by DeVry was a beauty. That Brazilian centaur is a seven-goal wizard if there ever was one. And there they go galloping out onto the field.

"The stands are crowded, color and style everywhere. Many well known people are here, friends. In the box on my right sits none other than that sensational beauty, Elaine Elliot, that gorgeous and glamorous girl from Mis-

Braves a Brand-New World—the Earth?

squad who is taking America by storm in Three Dimensional Pictures. Perhaps I can get her to the telemonitor when the game is over. Anyway, we will get a good shot of her presenting the silver cup to the winning team.

"But back to the game! Did you see that long shot? That was Paul Morton, star of the American team. That powerful back-handed swing looks like a sure— No! That demon of the paragon, Jeffery DeVry, neatly blocks that shot and— Boy, what a splendid underhand return he makes! Both teams



are in a sweet mellow in the middle of the field. Looks like the Brazilians might break through with another try at— What the devil? Hold right, folks! Something is happening that isn't as per schedule.

"That cloud isn't a cloud at all! It's—a dirigible! No, it isn't. It's a stratosphere ship of some kind, all enclosed, like a cigar in cellophane, gray and shiny. It's settling in the very center of the field. It'll be in your line of vision in half a second. It's stopped the game! The players are galloping madly out of the way to save their necks!

"What the hell? Pardon me, friends and censors, but this is crazy. Listen

to that thunder. It was a loud rocket blast. Hear the people screaming and shouting? My God, what a spectacle! Nobody's hurt—just mob hysteria. Grab your chairs and watch for yourselves while I go out on that field and see what this is all about. Here, Jack. Keep this equipment in focus."

SHAYNE vaulted out of the stand and started running toward the center of the polo field. Recovering from their amazement at the thunder and roar of blasting rockets, which had ruined polo playing for the day on this field, a few others followed him. Only Elaine Elliot turned accusing eyes on the little Mr. Rynder.

"What's this, Maurice?" she asked in a savage whisper. "Another publicity stunt of yours?"

"A stunt of mine?" ejaculated the cinema vice-president, his eyes bulging. "You know we ain't got any airships like that, Elaine. I never saw one before. You tell her, Mr. Hartman."

John Hartman, big and massive and piercing of eye, was studying the cause of the uproar with narrowed eyes.

"A genuine stratosphere vessel of some kind," he stated tersely. "Streamlined—crystal observation ports—rockets— By jove, it has an air-lock! A rocket ship with an air-lock. That machine has come from Europe as sure as we're a foot high. There's nothing like it in America, Thomson, or I'd have known of it. But what made the fool set her down in the middle of this polo field?"

"I will think it's a gag," asserted Miss Elliot, crossing the legs which were destined to make millions for Three Dimensional. She glanced suspiciously from her companions to the center of the field.

"I'd bet money on it," agreed Henry Thomson in his deep bass voice as he stroked his thin and ascetic face with long, tapering fingers. "I also suspect Hartman and Rynder, Elaine. But it's an expensive stunt. Somebody will have to refund all the money and repair this field. I wouldn't be sur-

prised if that pilot sleeps in jail to-night."

Unaware of this discussion—he would have been skeptical had he heard it—Louis Shayne pushed his way through the gathering circle of people and indignant polo players. He surveyed the queer ship with shrewdly appraising eyes.

He hadn't had time to describe the spectacular landing to his television audience. The wingless ship had been hovering far above like a motionless cloud. Suddenly spiraling down like a silent hornet, it was maneuvered with speed and flexibility that were little short of marvelous.

It had hovered above the center of the field like a humming bird at the tip of a flower while the frightened polo players scattered out of the way. Then it had settled its tubular length on the ground as lightly as a feather. It's only noise and damage came from that one bluish-yellow flare of keel rockets.

There was no doubt in Shayne's eyes that this was a remarkable piece of aerial equipment. It compared with the most advanced aircraft of the day as modern aircraft compared with primitive ox-carts. Despite its size and obvious weight—it must have been fully a hundred feet long and thirty feet in diameter—it had handled as beautifully as a darting swallow.

There were no signs of military armaments about the solid, sleek sides of the craft. But there was no telling what sort of equipment, lethal or otherwise, might be housed within that rounded, tapering hull of gray metal.

SHAYNE heard the faint whine of machinery from within the satiny hull. A circular port in the belly of the ship, just below the blunt nose and forward of the keel, slowly opened to reveal what could only be an air-lock. It was like the opening of the massive door to one of Colonel Thompson's bank vaults. A tubular, skeletal framework of metal steps cranked out, and a man boldly stepped upon the still smoking ground.

But what a fantastic man! Fully two inches taller than six feet, broad-shouldered and rangy, he made Louis

Shayne—who was no midget—feel like one. Upon his head was a close-fitting metal helmet that shone in the afternoon sun like burnished gold. It was raucous and becoming, with a pair of wings like those of Hermes, plus a pair of earphones.

That was only starting at the top. He wore a blouse which fitted snugly at wrist and waist and molded his muscular torso beautifully. His trousers fitted him like an exaggerated pair of riding breeches. His feet were encased in a pair of glittering boots that looked exactly like flexible glass. Around his waist was a sort of harness with studs and buttons, like an instrument panel.

"Good lord!" muttered Shayne. "What an outfit! Rainbow Pallets in person. Now who the hell thought up this stunt?"

The stranger played it straight. He had rugged but nice looking features, and keen blue eyes which he permitted to sweep over the gathering crowd soberly. Then he bowed solemnly and addressed himself to Shayne, although he included everybody within hearing.

"Greetings, my friends," he said in a resonant, mellow voice which had the exquisite diction and ring of a fife-like chat. But his expression was dead-pan and his bearing solemn as a judge pronouncing sentences as he went on. "From the people of Xarocula to the inhabitants of Earth, I bring salutations."

A few of the quick-witted Ransara caught the intonations of his voice and promptly began laughing. He raised his eyebrows slightly and glanced around in a seriously questioning manner but without embarrassment or annoyance. He seemed to be studying and tabulating the facial expressions of mirth about him. Expectantly he turned back toward Shayne.

"Xarob-yaw-lee?" repeated the sports reporter phonetically. "What's that? A new breakfast food?"

"I beg your pardon," answered the stranger politely. "I do not comprehend you. Xarocula is the fourth planet in this Solar System. It is known to your astronomers as Mars."

"I get it," said Shayne wearily. "Candy. At first I thought it was Rainbow Pallets. Your company believes

in doing things in a big way. You're doped up faster than the Beechnut girls."

"Candy? Rainbow Poppers? Beechnut girls?" Puzzled, the stranger's fine blue eyes centered upon the reporter's ironic face. "I don't perceive your meaning, but you cannot be joking. You are not mischievous, like these others."

"You said it, brother. It takes Weber and Fields to make me laugh, and you know where they are. Your firm isn't going to laugh, either, when they find out how much this stunt of yours is going to cost them."

Obviously they were getting nowhere. Louis Shayne waited patiently.

"But you don't seem to understand," protested the other. "I admit I cannot follow you. I just informed you that I have come to Earth from Mars on a special mission—and in all friendship."

An irate polo official, flanked by two uniformed police officers, came hurrying through the crowd. He angrily confronted the tall stranger in the burnished helmet.

A couple of the polo players dismounted and were pushing forward, swinging their mallets grimly.

"You've ruined this field!" stormed the official. "You've broken up this championship match. What the hell do you think you're doing? Who do you think you are? This is no airport!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," said the stranger. "I had no idea you people of Earth took your play so seriously. I will remedy that at once."

CHAPTER II

Lienkin's Mission

HE touched a stud at his belt and a dial deftly twisted a dial. Instantly there sounded the hum of machinery from within his queer craft. The skeletal steps withdrew. The heavy circular port swung shut.

"Please stand back!" he cried in a



singing, carrying voice. "There will be no rocket blast. But it would be a calamity if anybody were injured because of my—"

"Not so fast, buddy!" snapped the nearer of the two policemen. "Who's operating that dirigible? Who did you talk to over that radio outfit you're wearing? Let's see your license."

Before the accused could answer, there was a silent rush of air. The gray ship seemed to leap from the ground, giving Shayne the dizzy impression that it was falling away from Earth. It shot straight upward, dwindled rapidly to the size of a prism crystal and then simply winked out of being.

"There's no one aboard my vessel. I merely sent it up into the stratosphere by remote control." He touched his belt and then frowned at the parched, honeycombed ground. "I did spot the playing field somewhat, didn't I? Forgive me."

The grounds official became inarticulate. One of the policemen laughed curly.

"That ship's no dirigible," said one of the halted polo players, catching Shayne by the arm. "I know something about aviation, and that craft was a heavier-than-air machine, with some new sort of motive power."

"The guy's crazy!" The field offi-

dial finally found his voice. "Arrest him!"

Shayne pulled out of his daze.

"Hold on!" he snapped. "This is serious as hell, but you needn't get tough because a guy pulls a gag like this for publicity. He was only obeying orders. His sponsors will pay for all the damage, of course. All right, my futuristic friend, drop the act and start talking. What's all this about?"

The man in the weird garb shook his head in bewilderment.

"This situation is beyond me. And I was rated highly on Xarcocula in my knowledge of Earthmen."

"Okay, Flash Gordon," said Shayne. "Let's go over to the office and straighten out this business."

"Gladly," agreed the other. "But what did you call me? We discarded the system of personal names a thousand years—years—ago on Xarcocula. I am legally known as X-two-three-four-seven-nine-eight-nine. That's as close as I can translate Xarcoculan digits to your Arabic numerals. However, I am known to my intimates as Lumbkin, an archaic family name."

Shayne almost choked on that one. "Lumbkin huh? Lumbkin—kid, for short, and you're certainly a kiddie. The Kid from Mars, with a social security number as long as my arm. Well, come on, my lamb, let's go kid the Meadowbrook moguls, the cops, and the Federal aviation authorities out of this rap."

WITH a curious crowd trooping after them, Shayne led his bizarre companion off the field. Closely flanking them were Bixby, the grounds official, and the two grim-jawed policemen. It didn't prove necessary to go to the club office. Several officials were gathered in front of the Thompson box, and Hartman beckoned to his own reporter.

Shayne made one more effort to give some good advice.

"Better drop your Mars role, brother. That's my big boss, and he doesn't care for clowning in private. The thin, white-haired gent with him is Colonel Thompson—as if you don't know. He's the biggest national col-

ored in civilian life you'll ever meet."

"Thank you," said Lumbkin in some perplexity. "I thought I understood the thought processes of your civilization fairly well. Now I am inclined to believe I have much to learn."

"Ball!" retorted Shayne.

"A male ruminant quadruped of Earth," Lumbkin responded promptly. "Used for certain primitive types of work, for food, and the hides for a barbarous material called leather. But you will shortly pass out of that trade era. You are now entering the stage of plastics."

Shayne surveyed him through narrowed eyes. The face of the man from Xarcocula was innocent of guile.

They halted in front of the box. With the heated assistance of Mr. Bixby, Shayne gave a brief account of the matter. When they turned to the cause of the disturbance, they were amazed to see him standing before the box. His muscular, sinewy, bronzed hands were gripping the railing as he stared reverently at the eye-filling Miss Elaine Elliot. Elaine, calloused to the idleness of thousands, was undergoing the optical treatment with admirable equanimity.

"You!" said Colonel Thompson in his deep voice. "The gentleman from Mars. I say there."

But the gentleman from Mars was lost on Venus. A queer look had come into his intensely blue eyes. His lips parted, and he began speaking, almost chanting in lyric prose.

"Beauty conquels in living flesh," he said. "That intangible essence so lightly imprisoned in the heart of the Quinceas flower of the Burning Desert. Hair as black and sleek as the fur of the fabulous Chee-Chee bird. Eyes that gleam in black softness like the Kaldord Moslems along the banks of the Great Enaved Canal. At last do I behold womanly beauty such as has vanished from the entire world of Xarcocula these five hundred years. Earth maiden, what is your name?"

"Ray, Helen, Shelley," began Shayne. "I've already admitted you've got a good act. But snap out of it now and talk sense. This is serious, and it's going to cost somebody plenty."

"What language!" exclaimed Maurice Rynder rapturously. "You should be a press agent instead of even such a glorified sandwich man. I pay men a thousand dollars a week who can't sling adjectives like that."

"And not one of them has anything to do with a ruined polo field and a postponed championship match," said Colonel Thomlinson dryly. "Come, man, before these officers cast you off to jail. Who are you? What are you advertising?"

A blue-eyed stranger came to himself with a start as Shayne nudged him. The fervent glow faded from his eyes.

He bowed politely.

"My name is Liankin. I come to Earth from the planet you Earthmen call Mars. My mission is a peaceful one, but of vital importance to my own world. I ask that you call a conference of your men of science so I can explain my quest and ask for desperately needed assistance. Xorocula has lost a precious ingredient without which it is doomed to perish. The people of Mars have lost something which they must regain. You Earthlings have that secret in great abundance despite your many other faults and failings."

"See?" said Shayne to Hartman with a shrug. "Natty as a pean groove. So hooked up, it smells to heaven."

"Just what is this lost ingredient?" demanded Hartman.

Louis Shayne groaned. It was just a matter of time before the phony blundered.

"It is difficult to put into words," said Liankin slowly. "For want of a better description I must call it—call it a—*smile of humor*."

"What?" shouted Thomlinson, scarcely audible above the sudden roar of laughter.

"There!" cried Liankin helplessly, indicating the grinning faces all about. "That is it. I—I can't explain it. In fact, it seems idiotic to me. But the most brilliant scientists of Xorocula concur in the opinion that—*this humor*, which we do not understand, is the vital catalyst needed so terribly on our dying planet. I cannot explain

here. It will take time for me to put into words of your language the meaning for which I am groping."

"What the hell has this nonsense to do with polo?" demanded Blahy. "Ten thousand people here—the cream of the Social Register—and we are subjected to an exhibition like a balloon ascension at a county fair. I demand the arrest of this man at once and the filing of suit against the company which sponsored this outrage!"

"Just a minute, Blahy," said Colonel Thomlinson. He turned to Liankin. "You claim to be from Mars. Are you denying that you are a human being?"

Liankin pondered the question.

"I see and feel the atmosphere of incredulity about me. I find it inexplicable. To answer your query—I am tell for tell a replica of yourselves. If by human being you mean a native of Earth, I am not human. But surely you know that the energy concept we call life follows a definite pattern. Just as there are only so many elements in the entire Universe, which are universally distributed, so are the sports of life. In our own Solar System, three planets offered something like the same general living conditions—Venus, Earth, and Mars.

"Venus has just put the reptilian age behind her. Earth is in lusty childhood. Mars—poor Xorocula—is facing senility. There are other forms of life on our sister planets, but they have developed in fashions beyond our ken. Xoroculan scientists have long studied the mysteries of space through their radio-telescopes. Later, we will gladly put our greater knowledge at your disposal. But now we have come to you for aid."

John Hartman jerked his head for Shayne to follow him around to the back of the box. The reporter hastened to meet him.

"Shayne," said the publisher in soft, sharp tones. "That fellow may be a crackpot as you suggested. But, lunatic or not, he's got something tremendous in that stratosphere craft. If it's only half as good as it looked today, we've got to keep that invention in America."

"Yes, sir, but the setup smells high

to me," said the cynical reporter. "You know, Mr. Hartman, we've seen some mighty slick stunts pulled in our time. I've even thrown a few curves myself when—"

"This is no curve!" snapped Hartman. "This is an order! You get back there and take that nut under your wing, understand? Freeze to him tighter than his own skin. I'll get him out of this mess. But you hang onto him until we can get hold of the plans of that rocket ship or whatever it is."

CHAPTER III

Men Working

LOUIS SHAYNE should have been hardened to such assignments. He found he wasn't.

"But if he keeps up this Kid from Mars stuff I'll go batty," he protested. "Why, that guy's liable to want to flood the subways with sea-water just to see if the cars can swim. If he's turned loose in Manhattan in that goofy garb he might—"

"Get him out of those slapstick clothes. Promise him anything he wants. Tell him we'll call a meeting of every scientist in the world and stage the party at Lake Geneva. I don't give a damn what you promise him. But stick to him until we get hold of that ship. And I don't want anybody else to heat me to it. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Shayne. His eyes went disgustedly out of focus. Hartman might not have liked that look if he had not been too busy to notice it.

"All right. Get around there and collar that freak. I'll take things over when we have more time."

The publisher went back to the box while the sports reporter hastened around to the front. Bixby was raising his voice in renewed demand for legal reprints. Hartman thrust forward to the railing and held up his hand.

"The favor has gone far enough," he called out in a clear, curt voice. "Can't you understand, Mr. Bixby? The favor of Elaine Elliot's beauty has traveled

so far that Mr. Lamb—er—Mr. Kid has come down from Mars to see her in person. Didn't you hear him eulogize over her?"

Bixby's mouth gaped. Maurice Rynder shuddered slightly in relief and then relaxed with a sigh.

"You—you mean—this is just a publicity stunt?" blurted the club official.

"I wouldn't say it was a publicity stunt," reproved Hartman quickly. "I said the gentleman from Mars came all the way to see Miss Elliot. In recognition of his arduous Three Dimensional Pictures will gladly guarantee indemnity for all damages. You have my pledged word, Mr. Bixby."

Bixby bloomed like a morning glory under the early Sun, but Rynder uttered a yelp. Colonel Thomlinson looked along his thin nose at the publisher and kept his own counsel.

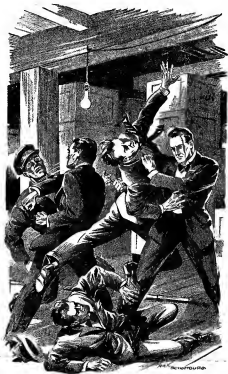
Louis Shayne, for once undecided whether to laugh, sneer, or cheer, took his cue from his big boss. He yelled for the television equipment to be focused for a closeup at the box. He leaped in front of the oscillators and began talking in rapid-fire sentences.

"The greatest event of the age, folks! That stratosphere ship was none other than the private liner of Lambkin, the Kid from Mars— Yes, Mars! Mr. Lambkin came forty million miles to lay his heart at the feet of Miss Elaine Elliot, the star of Three Dimensional Pictures, the only star for the Kid from Mars! Just a minute, folks. I'll have Lambkin address you while your screens pick up a close shot. Have you got a surprise coming?"

HE left the microphone and hurried over to grasp Lambkin by the arm. The man from Xaxotulu was once more gripping the box railing and staring in fascination at the face of Elaine Elliot.

"Elaine," he murmured softly. "Elaine! I like that name."

Miss Elliot sighed, like a bewitched person coming out of a spell. She gazed at the fantastically striped Lambkin. A cold little smile froze her lips as she withdrew behind her case-hardened exterior shell. But there was a faint shadow of regret lurking in her



Blumenberg tore into his kidnappers like a mad dog between JG Hen. XIV

great black eyes. She sighed.

"So it was a gag after all," she stated through her set teeth at the slowly recuperating Mr. Rynder. "There are times, Maurice, when I actually hate you."

"Elaine," began the vice-president weakly. "I'll swear—"

"And a very clever gag it is," cut in the firm voice of John Hartman. "I congratulate you, Rynder. I didn't think it would work at first, but I'll have to admit it's the best publicity stunt you've ever pulled. This will send Three Dimensional stock soaring." Then, sotto voce: "Play it up, you fool!"

All of it was incomprehensible to the man from Mars. Llanckin became aware of the insistent tagging at his arm. He whirled around as quickly that he almost upset the sports reporter.

"Oh!" he said. "It is you. Do you realize that you haven't even told me who you are?"

"Just call me Louis," said Stayne, adjusting himself to the vibrant strength he had felt surging through the other's frame. "We're practically going to be colleagues in the same system. Come on over to the telecaster and speak a few words to your public. At least ten million people are looking and listening in. Give them that welcome speech and that peroration on Elaine."

Llanckin nodded in quick understanding, but he suffered himself to be led from the presence of Elaine Elliot with obvious reluctance.

* * * * *

AMONG the crowd that milled about the ruined polo field, stood a man named Dr. Percival Folkestone. He had watched the strange airship through a pair of powerful binoculars until it had disappeared out of sight in the blue. The curious crowd trooped after the garish principal in this queer little drama. But Dr. Folkestone returned his glasses to the smart black leather carrying-case and walked briskly off the field.

Nobody observed his maneuver, al-

though Dr. Folkestone was worthy of notice. He was tall, blond, with light blue eyes, a crisp little Vanduyke which made one think instinctively of professional Vienna. He was dressed in the height of fashion. Nor was it amazing for Dr. Folkestone to be carrying such magnificent binoculars. For Dr. Folkestone was a highly successful optometrist, and lenses were his main.

Eminent, impeccable, thoroughly successful, Dr. Folkestone entered to the wealthiest and most influential people. He was not a sportsman in the accepted sense of the word, but he had a hobby. This was, oddly enough, aviation. He shared this hobby with Ed Carol, his valet and chauffeur, a reduced ex-sergeant of the U. S. Army air force.

He found Carol standing beside the limousine in the parking area beyond the grandstand. No one else was around.

Carol was gazing up at the sky, scratching his chin thoughtfully.

"So you saw it, too," Folkestone remarked.

"Yes, sir," his chauffeur replied. "It looked like one of those Goodrich dirigibles, only different."

"It was different," said Folkestone, getting into his car. "LaGuardia Field, as quickly as possible."

Within the hour the limousine drew up at the airport.

"Going up this afternoon, Dr. Folkestone?" asked an attendant.

The two men had walked swiftly to the hangar where the doctor kept his low-wing, sealed-cabin monoplane.

"Right, at once," Folkestone replied.

"Check the oxygen equipment, Carol!"

Not a word of astonishment nor the slightest look of surprise was exhibited by his chauffeur. In a few minutes he had the huge radial twin motors of the metal plane warming up. Folkestone joined him, taking the co-pilot's seat. Both men clad themselves in heavy, fur-lined suits.

"Take her up," directed Folkestone, adjusting his earphones and oxygen mask. "Altitude."

The motors revved up into a sweet roar of power. The plane rolled majestically down the field at the takeoff

instruction coming from the loud-speaker. The pilot banked the plane in a wide spiral. Dr. Folkestone flipped a switch and cut off communication with the ground.

"Now, Carol!" he ordered. He opened a compartment and began assembling a small telescope. "If the pilot of that ship is obeying orders, the ship we want to see is cruising around high above the Meadowbrook field. Find it."

"Easy, Doctor," said Carol confidently. "There ain't a plane in the East that has the ceiling this baby has. We darn near broke the English altitude record, fifty-four thousand, a month ago."

the altimeter! We're at fifty-two thousand now, practically our ceiling. Can't you feel that? Listen to our motors. Look at the ice forming. You're breathing almost straight oxygen."

The fashionable optometrist uttered an exclamation as he took the small telescope from his eye and glanced at the instrument panel.

"Geeze Gott! It's impossible!"

"Oh, I don't know," returned Carol. His attention was centered on the piloting of his own ship, depriving him of the telescope and the opportunity for close observation. "That Picard guy from Switzerland went pretty high in his balloon."

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"We may have to break it today," Folkestone replied grimly. "That ship definitely has something valuable."

"I'll find it if it's even close to Long Island," promised Carol.

CAROLL proved correct, but they didn't examine the odd craft which had landed Llamkin. Late in the afternoon, at an altitude of fifty thousand feet, Dr. Folkestone sighted the gray cigar-shaped vessel—fully two miles above them! He pointed it out to his companion.

"There she is," he said. "Climb."

The pilot's voice echoed with astonishment in the doctor's earphones.

"What d'you mean—climb? Look at

"That ship is no dirigible!" snapped Folkestone. "It's a heavier-than-air machine. I saw it on the field. It has some marvellous new method of propulsion. And, Gott, it isn't moving at all!"

"Helicopters!" suggested Carol.

"There is nothing but that stream-lined hull!" growled the doctor angrily. "Here, you take a look while I raise some altitude out of this ship."

Carol focused the telescope and stared. Folkestone used all his considerable skill to spiral the specially built monoplane higher. It was no use. Fully ten thousand feet above them, serenely indifferent to the metal bird's buzzing futilely below it, the queer

stratosphere ship being poised. It seemed glued up there.

"Gott, Gott, Gott!" roared Dr. Folkstone in angry despair.

He studied the belly and sides of the sleek vessel through his telescope while Carroll fought to jockey upward a few hundred more feet.

"Fifty-five thousand is the top," he announced finally. "It's no use. Those ain't no heavier-than-air machines that'll do it. And the word, in America, is 'God!'"

"Descend," said Folkstone reluctantly. "We have business to attend to."

CHAPTER IV

A Gay Explorer

AT TEN o'clock that night, Dr. Folkstone was seated in the bare back office of a huge warehouse which extended out to the jaws of a U-shaped wharf. This was the headquarters of the Mammoth Mercantile Importing Company, on East River.

Opposite the optometrist sat a stocky, grizzled man with a benevolent face that didn't match his glinty eyes at all. Mr. George Crown, head of the company, had once been known as *Harry Hauptmann* George Keene. But that was long ago and far away. Mr. Crown was now a loyal, naturalized, flag-waving American who apparently viewed the Bund, Communism and Fascism with manifest horror.

"I tell you, Crown, this thing is immense!" Dr. Folkstone was saying. "Carroll and I couldn't get within ten thousand feet of it. With such a weapon we can subjugate the whole world. I described the ship to you as thoroughly as I could."

"I believe you, Doctor," nodded the heavy-set listener. "You could not tell whether this man Lambchen represents a European inventor, or whether he himself is the inventor?"

"I could not. I didn't linger to follow him. I went to check on the ship."

Crown nodded again. "I think you did right. But we must contact this

Lambchen at once. I rely on your astronomical judgment. We must get that ship for our homeland. Those voracious Americans change their construction plans so rapidly, it is useless to steal blueprints. They order a hundred ships from a test ship, and then demand important changes before the first contract ship is built."

"There won't be any sudden changes in this ship," declared Folkstone. "And it isn't American, I know. Should I contact this Lambchen and make him an offer?"

"And expose yourself? Nein. Besides, this may be some insane advertising scheme, after all. These crazy Americans! I will set things in motion. You watch Colonel Thompson. If he shows an interest, we will know it is good. And then we will strike!"

"But suppose Lambchen has already made a deal?"

Crown smiled. His jovial face was momentarily transformed into a lethal mask.

"Leave that to me, my friend. This Lambchen will never deliver."

"How high dare we bid?"

"Bid? Who said anything about bidding? At the right time, Lambchen will give his wonder ship—and his life—freely to our cause. Go now and put Thompson under strict surveillance."

CHARLES J. KEENE, president of Rainbow Pellets, Inc., was in a high rage, though it was almost midnight. The directors' room on the top floor of the Rainbow plant in Queens was ablaze with light. As he pounded on the end of the massive conference table, half a dozen white-faced young men looked and listened timorously.

Mr. Keene was indeed something for the eyes and ears. Clean-shaven and red of face, heavy of jaw and paunch, bald on top and fringed with gray at the timber line, nevertheless he trotted his aviculusopods around with befitting dignity.

"Bah!" he roared, banging his fist. "What kind of associates do I have around me? I pay you the highest salaries you ever received in your lives, and what do you do? You sit around and let the greatest sensation of the

year get up and walk away right under your paracetamol noses!"

"But, C. J.," hesitantly offered Putnam, the vice-president. He was a thin little man with a long nose which had often been accused of a distortion of the sense of smell. "How was Grosset to know that?"

"Shut up!" snapped Keene. "If you had been out there at Meadowbrook this afternoon, you wouldn't even have seen this Lambkin landing on the field in his ship."

"But, C. J.," protested Putnam, twitching his proboscis nervously, "perhaps there is something to that stratosphere ship, after all. Maybe, there's—"

"Damn the ship!" roared Keene, banging the table again. "Let the U. S. War Department worry about it. Our business is promoting Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellets. That was a natural we didn't even have sense enough to take advantage of. Grosset, I pay you thirty thousand dollars a year for publicity and advertising, and you let the stunt of the century get away from you! Why, I—"

Grosset, head of the advertising department, a sleek looking gentleman in his forties, shivered and braved the lightning.

"But it all happened so suddenly. How was I to know who was sponsoring that stunt? How could I tell just what—"

"What difference does it make who put on that show? That was our broadcast, wasn't it? You were supposed to be in charge of it, weren't you? It costs us five thousand dollars each time we telecast one of those sporting events. And what did you do? You let John Hartman and Maurice Rynder grab off the glory for Three Dimensional Pictures! Five million people on the tele-screens, and you let all that build-up go to a now-forgotten picture venture—and on our time! By tomorrow it will be faded all over the country, and we don't get a dime's worth of publicity out of it."

"But Lambkin claimed he was from Mars! He disclaimed any sponsors behind his publicity stunt. I wasn't sure of anything for awhile."

Bang went the huge presidential fist. "I'm beginning to think you never see, Grosset. You let that sports announcer, Shayne, use the whole show for that picture concern Hartman is in up to his neck. I hope he loses his shirt! If this fellow disclaimed all sponsors that was all the more reason for grabbing him for Rainbow Pellets. That's what I called this meeting for."

"Every one of you get busy right now and push advertising. Get out news flashes, lithographed posters—everything. Twist this attention to the glory of R.S.V.P. Grosset, if you want to hold your job, get hold of this Lambkin fellow at once and sign him up for us. Get him away from that plane, Hartman, and bring him into our fold."

"But how?"

"I don't give a damn how! Kidnap him, choke him, bribe him, steal him! But get him. Kill all that Three Dimensional stuff the minute you land him. I'll see John Hartman and his picture concern in every court in the land! I'll teach him to steal Rainbow glory!"

"But, Mr. Keene, suppose Lambkin is really backed by some advertising firm! Suppose—"

"Suppose hell! What if he is? They've got a suit against Three Dimensional themselves. Find out who it is and buy 'em off. Get that? Pay 'em their price and get out of the picture quick! This publicity is worth millions—millions to us, and you let it slide through your butter-fingers! Now, get out of here and repair that damage."

"You are giving me quite blame?" asked Grosset hesitantly.

"More than that," roared Keene. "I'm giving you the sack if you don't make good. Putnam, take that twitchy long nose of yours along and see that Grosset does a good job. Corner this Lambkin fellow. Call me if you can't handle him, and I'll do the job personally."

IN the living room of Elaine Elliot's penthouse suite at the Telecast Plaza, surrounded by his circle of sycophants and gentlemen of the affirma-

five, Maurice Rynder was getting up a good head of steam. He waddled back and forth across the rug like an animated, firing firecracker. Waving his hands eloquently, he spewed words and ideas as only a picture magazine can.

"This is the finest thing of the year," he declaimed. Two press agents and three stenographers jotted down his orders. "It puts technicolor cartoons and other picture stuff positively in the red. Sure it costs plenty of money, but we put Three Dimensional Pictures over with the biggest bang in the business. Jones, release the stories to the newspapers, and do a good job. Young, handle the radio and television. Play up this Kid from Mars like nobody's business. All for Three Dimensional!"

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

"Fine," said Mr. Rynder. "Hop to it quick. Mr. Hartman wants this played up big—and so do I," he added hastily.

"Yes, Mr. Rynder."

Gracefully smothering a cigarette in a long ivory holder, the gorgeous and eye-gladdening Miss Elaine Elliot was not yawning anything. Her black eyes were fixed disconcertingly on the fat little vice-president's face as he tossed off colors and scattered embryonic ideas right and left.

"So it was just another publicity stunt, after all," she said aloud. "Of all the cheap and garish things I've ever seen pulled on the public—"

"Cheap?" cried Rynder in great pain. "You call it cheap to pay back ten thousand spot cash and repair a horse-croquet field? You call Three Dimensional advertising that will make you famous all over the world, garish? Elaine, how can you say a thing like that?"

"Okay," the glamour girl responded languidly. "But I'm pretty well fed up with this stuff. I warn you, Maurice. I won't have the least thing to do with this brainstorm you and John Hartman are having. Give me a fresh cigarette."

Both press agents leaped to their feet to obey. Maurice Rynder waved them back as he produced a gold case and offered it to Elaine.

"I'm paying you boys to do Elaine

Elliot favors that show box-office results, not to offer cigarettes at a thousand dollars a week. Elaine, I swear to you I never—" Rynder broke off. He realized he was about to disclaim credit before his yes men. "I'll swear to you this is not cheap and gaudy. Can't you see how big and—and glamorous it is? Why, the whole thing's tremendous. It's gigantic, colossal!"

"You're right," agreed Elaine with a straight face, and nobody else dared so much as snicker.

"There!" beamed Rynder, waxing expansive. "Now, you boys hurry along and start things popping along the various lines I suggested. Keep in touch with me. This has to be done quick. Elaine, I'm glad you understand. There is something you must do. You have to play up to this Lumbkin fellow. I want you to be seen together. We got to make some stuff. Jones will take some interviews between you, but we got to capitalize on this before it gets cold."

"WHAT?" Because she was tall, she almost towered above the fat little man. "You are mad, Maurice Rynder! I'll submit to all this fake publicity because my contract calls for it. But you're not going to force me into the company of a fanatic who's not even a good ham actor just for—"

"Hush, hush!" begged Rynder. "That will be all for the present, girls. Transcribe your notes and get out those letters for my signatures."

The stenographers promptly withdrew in the wake of the two press agents. Rynder turned to pour soothing words at his enraged star. They were in the midst of a stormy discussion when the telephone began to ring imperiously.

In relief, the vice-president grabbed up the instrument. His reprieve was short. Elaine watched him curiously as his eyes bulged and his jaw dropped.

"What? What? Yes, I've just released every kind of publicity I could think of. I—Huh? KID? But, Mr. Hartman, you said distinctly to play it up, and I— Something else has come up? What has come up? Never mind! I—But, listen, I've already—Yes, yes,

"I'll try to stop it as best I can."

He pronged the transceiver, tattered over to a chair, and dropped. He let out a temperamental screech that would have done credit to Elaine at her best and madly clutched at his hair with both hands.

"First he says play it up! Then he says kill it! Worse he is than a thousand yea men." He bounced to his feet. "I'll talk to you later, Elaine," he cried as he ran toward the door. "I've got to stop Jones and Young—if I can catch them. Oh, what a madman!"

"What is it?" Elaine asked anxiously. "What has happened?"

"I don't know," wailed Rynder. "Hartman just called from Colonel Thomlinson's home. He told me to kill every bit of publicity on the Kid from Mars."

"Why?" the girl demanded quickly. "Has—has something happened to Lambkin? He left Meadowbrook with Louis Shayne right after his broadcast?"

"No, no—I don't know. Hartman just left Shayne and Lambkin and went to see Thomlinson. They're here, in this hotel!"

"Who? Hartman and Thomlinson?"



A SCENE OF Hospital splendor appeared before their eyes (Opp. XVII)

"No, Laramkin and Shayne! I've got to catch Jones and Young." With a slam of the door, the harried Mr. Rynder was gone.

CHAPTER V

A Medium of Exchange

IN SPITE of Rynder's attempt to kill the publicity, New York took the Kid from Mars to its neon-lighted bosom for a full week before dropping him cold. And that, said a smart columnist, was remarkable considering that his act was a weak warm-over of an old Martin radio gag.

Louis Shayne's handling of Laramkin proved more difficult than the sports reporter and his boss had imagined. While the man from Xanadu played his role grimly to the end, he proved to be neither a dope nor a derring.

"The first thing to do," said Shayne as he got his charge away from Meadowbrook in a closed car, "is to find you a place to stay. I guess it won't do to show you around the theatrical area. You'd be recognized."

"Why?" asked Laramkin. "Do I resemble any certain Earthman?"

"We're alone, pal," said Shayne wearily. "You've sold us all a nice bill of goods. So deep that someone with me when nobody's around. It isn't funny."

"I'm sorry, Louis."

"That's better. Have you ever been in New York before?"

"I've never been on Earth before."

"I thought I said to drop—" Shayne began angrily. He was halted by the grave expression in Laramkin's eyes. "Oh, hell, take off that damned tin hat. You make me think of the invasion of Poland to the tune of 'The Chocolate Soldier.'"

"Gladly, if it annoys you. I don't need it for the present. But it isn't tin. It's a special alloy comparable to your chromium steel, but with certain sensitive properties. I use it to control my ship."

He removed the helmet as he spoke, revealing to the reporter a closely cropped head of blond hair which narrowly missed being red.

"Dammed if I don't believe you're a Swede, Laramkin, but you speak a choice United States. What's your skill for that?"

"I have been studying Earth languages for two years," answered Laramkin soberly. "After some consultation with my associates, I selected Americanized English as the most adaptable for our purpose. I purposely followed the style of enunciation of your national spokesman."

"Not too subtle," granted Shayne. "Mind if I take a look at your war helmet?"

"Of course not," agreed Laramkin, handing over the helmet.

It was a flimsy made headpiece. Shayne marveled at its construction and at the obvious expense somebody had gone to to put over this stunt. When he held it to his ear he heard the subdued whine of a distant dynamo and the rhythmic clicking as of a relay switch.

"You mean to say that you keep in touch with your ship's crew with this two-way outfit?" he asked, gently touching the earphones.

"I have no crew," said Laramkin gently. "I control the ship through that helmet and several of the instruments on my belt. I was sent alone to Earth on this mission. Perhaps when I can permit you to examine the vessel you will understand."

"That," said Shayne, "is a date. Can you bring it down tomorrow at a regular airport, or a private spot I will select? I mean, so we can examine it."

FOR THE first time a faint gleam of suspicion appeared in the Kid's blue eyes.

"I can—when the time seems auspicious. It appears to me that you show more interest in my method of transportation than in the fact and purpose of my arrival."

"Laramkin, how can you say that?"

said Shayne reproachfully. "After all the force at the polo field!"

Liamkin's face brightened. "Then you do believe me?"

"Certainly," said Shayne, his tongue automatically fitting into his cheek.

The guy must be from Scandinavia. He had to come from somewhere with his remarkable ship, and it was obvious he hadn't come from Central Europe. So he must be from some part of Scandinavia. Even his helmet, now that Shayne thought of it, had a sort of Norse motif.

But cynically Louis Shayne couldn't help believing that this was some sort of gigantic hoax. He struggled and turned his attention to the garments of his companion.

"What kind of material is that stuff?"

"The Xxoxothuan name would be unpronounceable to you. But it is a synthetic cloth manufactured like your rayon and nylon, with one major difference. This product is impregnated with asbestos. That makes it practically indestructible. It is loosely woven, so the body can have air. My boots are made of treated cotton, pliable and, of course, electrically insulated. You will achieve such results soon. Your scientists are at last on the right track with the recently developed atom smasher."

Shayne passed up the startling chemistry offered him and seized on technicalities.

"For a Martian, you're damned well informed on what we've done here on Earth," he stated astily.

"Why not?" asked Liamkin. "We have been studying your planet for three centuries of our time. There are about six hundred and eighty-seven Earth days to our sidereal year."

"You don't say!" retorted Shayne. "How did it happen that you guys didn't contact Earth before? You've had plenty of time—more than five hundred years."

"There always has to be a first time," Liamkin explained patiently. "We are not like Earthlings. We do not explore new seek adventure for adventure's sake. There must be an urgent necessity to make us brave space and a new planet. The matter of Mars' dying involves thousands and thousands of

years, not a few months. First we had to decide that Earth has the element we need. Then we had to prepare and condition a messenger who could stand the drastic change in environment. Since I was an infant, I was dedicated to this mission."

"Say, how old are you?" Shayne asked, carrying the ponderous joke along.

Liamkin hesitated. "From birth, computed by your measure of time, I am physically about thirty years old. Mentally, due to the advanced evolution on Xxox—Mars, I am perhaps fifty. I'm really just a youngster," he added modestly.

"Yeah," replied Shayne. "Just a kid—a kid from Mars?"

"Precisely. It was noted that I would be more malleable, more adaptable to Earthly concepts. For here I am to make observations, as well as obtain certain specimens—" He broke off abruptly, glancing sharply at the sports reporter. "I fear I am getting ahead of myself," he apologized.

"You're pretty fast, and plenty slick," admitted Shayne. "But you can't slide on barb-wire."

Liamkin puzzled this over as Shayne drove across the Triborough Bridge.

"As that remark appears to be irrelevant," he said at last, "I infer that it pertains to that elusive sense of humor for which I seek. Yet you have not given me the impression of being at all what you Earthlings term a comedian."

"Kid, you ought to see me at a party. I'm a scream."

"Indeed?" said Liamkin politely. "This is an interesting structure, this bridge. An excellent example of third-class engineering."

"Indeed?" mimicked Shayne. "And what would you consider first-class?"

"That," replied Liamkin gravely, "would be too intricate for your comprehension. Engineers of the second class built my space ship for me. When do I see Miss Elliot again?"

"I wouldn't know," choked Shayne. "If you can't figure that out by first-class engineering, you'll have to ask Maurice Rynder."

"Why? Is he her parent, or legal guardian?"

"No. He's just the little man who holds her contract for Three Dimensional. As far as she is concerned, he's Santa Claus."

"I see," said Llanckin in a tone which indicated clearly that he did not see. "Earth cities are veritable labyrinths, aren't they?"

"Robbie warrens," agreed Shayne curtly. "Nothing like the jungle you grew up in."

"There are no trees on Mars," replied Llanckin mildly. "The only arboreal growths are dwarfed specimens, north of the Burning Desert, in the barren area of Koorcia. That is one of the many reclamation projects the Council of Xeorcia has in view. Xeorcia is the capital city of Xeorcia. What building is that—the one just ahead of us?"

"Telecast Plaza, the swankiest hotel overlooking Central Park. It costs a buck just to slip a question to the doorman, and that's where you and I are going. Hartman said not to spare the horses. So you and I are going to take the swiftest suite available—a penthouse, if I can get it."

To his relief, Shayne had little difficulty getting his companion inside the hotel and into the royal suite, which was the house name for the east penthouse. Everybody stared furtively at the bizarre costume of Llanckin, but the guests of Telecast Plaza were too well bred to act impudently. Llanckin, for his part, surveyed everything with silent alertness, from the ornate band on the chest of the doorman to the instrument panel in the express elevator.

Safe at last in the penthouse, Shayne sighed in relief. He rang for Scotch and soda, and flung himself into the depths of a brocade divan.

"All right, Llanckin, sit down and let's go into a huddle. I'm damned if I know just how to proceed. I certainly can't build you up gratis for some manufacture, and I'll go nuts if I have to talk baby talk with you. But, damn it, we'll start with that! Now, look. We've got a quaint system of paying for what you get. It's called monetary

exchange, and even the Russians haven't found a satisfactory substitute for it yet. But don't let's start a discussion on that subject. We'll take things as they are.

"If your outfit has studied Earth for three of your centuries, you must know you can't just drop in on us and live on air. Didn't you ask for a sort of expense account? As one visiting tribesman to another tribe, didn't you bring anything to barter? In short, what were you going to use for money—marbles or chalk?"

"A pertinent question, Louis," admitted Llanckin. "While we doubtless overlooked a number of things, we did not neglect that."

HE OPENED a sort of inner pocket, and drew forth a handful of gray looking pebbles which he handed to the reporter.

"Uncut diamonds," he said. "They seemed to be the most valuable medium of exchange that wouldn't prove too bulky."

"What? Holy smoke! Are these genuine? Then—then, you've come from South Africa?"

"Genuine in the sense that they are pure crystallized carbon, yes," said Llanckin. "They are synthetic, of course. They were made by David in a sub-atomic pressure furnace. David is one of the Council of Xeorcia. He was my chief mentor in my upbringing. It is a long story, but I will relate it in your hall of science before your arrival. When will a time of meeting be set?"

"Jumping Dutchman!" exclaimed Shayne. "If these artificial diamonds are real, you're in Dutch with Uncle Sam for smuggling undeclared gems. This damned hoax gets cruder and cruder. I've got to get legal advice on this."

"Hoax?" I assure you there is no hoax, Louis. And if there is to be a sort of tax on importation, I am ready to pay it. I know what that is. Many centuries ago we had the same sort of absurd system on Xeor—on Mars. Who is this Uncle Sam? A relative of yours?"

"Don't talk—don't say anything."

pleaded Shayne. "Just sit down while I mix you a drink. I guess I'd better telephone Mr. Hartman."

Liamkin snuffed delicately at the brimming glass Shayne handed him. He tasted it experimentally, then nodded soberly.

"An intoxicant," he said sagely. "Affects the nerve system. We discontinued the use of such stimulants on Mars long before I was born."

"No wonder you have no sense of humor," snapped Shayne. "Just put that stimulant under your belt and shut up."

Liamkin slipped while Shayne started combing the city by phone for the publisher of the *Star-Tribune*. Without having to ask the reporter for any assistance, he mixed correctly a second drink. By the time Shayne located John Hartman and concluded a conversation he had finished it. The sports reporter hadn't missed any of this.

"You learn fast," he commented dryly as he pronged the transceiver. "For a kid from Mars, you're doing okay."

"I've been trained in observation since I was a child," answered Liamkin calmly. "This beverage—is communicates a sort of expansive sensation, doesn't it?"

"You're not kidding now, pal. But wait until you try champagne. If you never have. Maybe that's an idea. In vino, veritas."

"That," said Liamkin, frowning slightly as he marshaled his thoughts, "is Latin. There is truth in wine. I fear that meaning escapes me."

"So you know one of Earth's dead languages, too. Well, what do you care as long as you're truthful?"

"What is there to be gained by being otherwise?" asked Liamkin in surprise.

"I'm glad you feel that way," Shayne replied grimly. "That was John Hartman on the phone. He's on his way here now with a surgeon, a scientist, and an alienist. I hope you won't feel hurt. All they'll want to do is turn you inside out."

"Not at all," said the Kid from Mars. "On the contrary, I will welcome it gladly."

Shayne choked on his Scotch and soda.



CHAPTER VI

Preliminary Steps

JOHN HARTMAN put in his appearance with a whole retinue. Immediately in his rear came three professional looking men. Following them in single file stumbled half a dozen porters, laden like a safari.

The three staff officers dismissed the portage detail and checked over their supplies. The publisher came to the crux of the business with admirable brevity.

"Did you have to pick a penthouse in this particular hotel, Shayne? Isn't it enough that Three Dimensional Pictures is paying for the one Elaine El-Nor's using? Rynder is already delirious over the expenses cut at Meadowbrook."

"You told me to shoot the web," replied the sports reporter coolly. "You wanted the Kid from Mars corralled, didn't you? Well, this was the sadest and most exclusive place I could think of. I'm beginning to think you'll wish I'd hired a private sanitarium."

"We'll see about that," promised Hartman, turning on the grave-faced countenance of this connection. "Now, young man, if you are ready to drop this

hocus-pocus stuff about Mars, I'm ready to talk business with you. If not, I came prepared to call your bluff." He grimly indicated the three men he had brought with him.

"I am more than anxious to talk business," responded the Kid from Mars in his melodious voice. "Are these gentlemen the scientists to whom I am to address my message?"

The publisher's thawing smile froze upon his face. He reddened angrily when he noted the cynical grin about the sports reporter's lips. He cleared his throat. Shayne recognized the signs and settled back to watch the fireworks in lazy interest.

"Now see here, Mr. Lamsky," Hartman began. "It is perfectly obvious that you chose this bizarre method of approach to impress America with your stratosphere ship. I am the first to admit that you have succeeded admirably. But enough is enough. I am not interested in carrying the farce any further. Where and when can I see the plans of your invention? How soon will you give a demonstration. What is your price?"

"My name is Llamkin. There is no proper way of spelling it with the Phoenician alphabet. If you have difficulty with it, just call me by the first numeral of my Martian identification—X-twenty-three. Did I understand you to say that Miss Elaine Elliot is housed in this same domicile?"

The publisher strangled down a shout of fury.

"Just call him the Kid from Mars," suggested Shayne with a blank face.

"Lamkin will do," roared Hartman. "And since you insist, Mr. Lamkin, permit me to introduce these gentlemen. Dr. Caldwell, Dr. Weidmar, and Professor Strauss. They are here to examine you. Now will you stop your nonsense?"

"I am honored," said Lamkin, bowing. "I am at your service, gentlemen."

Shayne sat upright in his chair.

"You mean you're going to submit to a physical and mental examination, Kid?"

"Why not?" asked Lamkin. "Why should I object to undergoing precisely what I shall ask a few Earthmen to do on Mars?"

In Shayne's opinion, that was a hell of a screwy answer.

"Pleased, gentlemen," snapped the publisher.

IT WAS like tossing a fish to a troupe of acrobats. Professor Strauss pounced upon the burnished helmet which lay on the table. The two doctors had Llamkin stripped from the waist up in practically nothing flat. Hartman sat down and raised himself a stiff Scotch and soda, a grimly expectant smile on his face.

Lamkin not only submitted with fearless dignity, but he was usually a step ahead of his examiners. He was prodded and X-rayed and questioned and examined more thoroughly than Shayne had ever seen anybody gone over outside a dissecting room.

Lamkin examined the surgical and electrical equipment used on him with as much interest as the doctors exhibited in him. When handed a solution of blameth its drink, while Caldwell placed a fluorescent screen before him, he nodded sagely.

"A solution of the metallic element with the atomic weight of two hundred and eight. You wish to study a shadowgraph of my digestive tract with your ray machine, do you not?"

"Exactly," replied Dr. Weidmar, the psychiatrist. "You have been examined before? In Europe, perhaps?"

"On Mars, but not quite so crudely," was the calm and matter-of-fact answer.

He hesitated only once when asked to remove the remainder of his clothing. Then he agreed soberly. He took off his intricately studded and diked belt and laid it carefully on the ornate white marblepiece.

Professor Strauss put down the helmet, his lips pursed thoughtfully, and turned to Shayne.

"I'd like to see those ancient diamonds."

"Here," answered the reporter, producing them.

It took just five minutes with a few tools and a microscope for the scientists to raise a gleaming eye. He nodded, his lips parted slightly.

"These are genuine," he informed the publisher. "There seems to be evidence

of synthetic crystallization. But they are apparently flawless, and therefore, quite valuable."

While the publisher and the reporter goggled at each other, the professor turned his eagle eye on the material of Liamkin's garments. He verified everything the Kid from Mars had told Shayne. He seemed puzzled at the results he obtained. Then he walked over to the mirror to examine the queer belt belonging to Liamkin.

At this, a startling thing happened. With one mighty leap the male man crossed the room. He caught the astonished professor by the nape of the neck and fairly hurled him aside.

"Don't touch this!" he said. His blue eyes were blazing with angry fire, his fine nostrils dilated. "Nobody must lay a finger on this belt—ever! This is my only connecting link with my ship, and my ship is my only connecting link with my world. In your ignorance you must not tamper with forces you do not understand. Is that clear?"

Hartman shot a swift side glance at Shayne and then spoke soothingly.

"Of course, of course, Mr. Liamkin. The professor didn't mean to pry into your closely guarded secrets. He is merely conducting a scientific examination."

THE FIRE slowly died out of Liamkin's eyes, although his face remained set in grim and serious lines.

"I am sorry," he apologized as Professor Strauss picked himself up from the divan, uninjured but badly dazed. "I didn't mean to be rude or rough, but this belt is the one thing that must be

inviolate. Do not think I am hiding anything from you, my friends. I assure you I am not. I will gladly explain even this belt to your gathered savants, but it must not be tampered with in the meanwhile. I regret that I must insist on this."

"Sure, we understand," said Hartman cryptically. "Let the doctors finish with you."

The examination was concluded without further incident. Liamkin calmly absented his magnificently crumpled body in his queer clothing while the three professional men went into a brief huddle.

"Shall I send you a confidential report, Mr. Hartman?" asked Dr. Caldwell, putting away his instruments.

"Why not speak frankly, Doctor?" asked Liamkin solemnly as he readjusted his belt about his trim waist. "Surely you didn't find me particularly abnormal? I would like to know how I differ from Hartman."

"Let him hear it," said Shayne. "He can take it. If you can crack him, you're better men than I am, drinking gin."

"That has a familiar ring," said Liamkin, looking at the inscrutable face of the reporter. "Isn't that from the literature of your race?"

"You win again, Mr. Poem Detective," replied Shayne ironically. "I'll stooge for you on that one. I was paraphrasing Kipling—as if you didn't know."

"Thank you. Paraphrase, to translate with latitude . . ."

Liamkin's voice trailed off into silence. Dr. Caldwell snorted and addressed himself to the publisher.

[Turn page]



"Physically, Mr. Hartman, this man is a splendid specimen of manhood. I admit that I was somewhat amazed to find not even a vestigial trace of the vermiform appendix, wisdom teeth, or tonsils. But otherwise he is a perfectly normal and healthy male animal of not more than thirty years of age."

"You mean he is as human as we are?" Hartman asked, giving the listening subject a hard glance. "There's nothing queer about his lack of those anatomical items?"

"I mean precisely that, sir. There have been other cases of slightly advanced evolution recorded, although I admit I have never found all such points in one case. But I wouldn't call it more than remarkable."

"I see. And your findings, Dr. Weidmar?" Hartman looked at the alienist and then at Liankin's calm and politely interested face with relief.

Dr. Weidmar stroked his trim Van-dyke carelessly and spoke in a judicious manner.

"While the patient seems to harbor an obsession, laboring under an illusion—I wouldn't go so far as to call it a distinct aberration—or a sort of hallucination regarding his point of origin—That is to say, it is his idiosyncrasy to affect a certain fixation—"

"You mean he's fixated on the subject of Mars," clarified Shayne.

"Er—yes," Dr. Weidmar accepted the amendment. "In short, aside from this obviously wilful whimsy, the subject is as sane a man as I have ever examined, and a great deal more intelligent than most."

"That," said the publisher tersely, "is exactly what I expected to hear. But I never thought I would be crazy enough to spend money to convince an inventor that he isn't crazy." Now, Liankin, must I embarrass you further, or are you ready to drop this moon-quest and get down to brass tacks?"

"ERASQUERADE?" repeated

A. M. Liankin, his keen gaze traveling from one face to the other. "I don't believe I understand."

"All right," snapped the publisher impatiently. "You asked for it. If you can't read the handwriting on the wall, Professor Strauss will try to interpret

it for you. Can you oblige us, Professor?"

"With pleasure," said the scientist, briskly rubbing his hands. He was still ruffled over the abrupt manhandling he had received. "This whole business is absurd. I grant the mechanical and chemical genius which indubitably lies behind the evidence I have been permitted to examine—namely, metal, synthetic diamonds, materials, and boots. That is rendering sufficient homage to science. These things aside—I am going to enjoy the rest of this!"

"Mars? Liankin," he addressed himself to the gravely alert Liankin. "I'd like to propound a few questions in simple physics to you. Will you answer me as glibly as you have run through your examinations?"

"Gladly, Professor, if I can," responded Liankin, patiently oblivious to the sarcasm. "But I do not claim to be an authority on the subject. However, if I cannot enlighten you on the matter which puzzles you, I can promise you the correct information later from M-fifty-four-W-fifty-five-sixteen. He was my instructor in the physical sciences, and one of the greatest savants of Mars."

"Do the best you can," said Strauss acidly. "Perhaps it will be good enough. First, roughly, what is the mass and volume of Mars as compared with that of Earth?"

"That is so elemental that you should know it," said Liankin politely. "Mars has approximately one-seventh the volume, and one-ninth the mass, of Earth. Is that what you mean, or do you wish specific figures?"

"That will do nicely," said the professor smoothly. "And what, if you please, is the surface gravity of Mars—again as compared with that of Earth?"

"Let me reflect," said Liankin, without pausing to do much reflecting. "Mars has a density of three-point-nine-two compared with Earth's five-point-five. The surface gravity is thirty-eight one-hundredths."

"Correct. Then, an object weighing, say, thirty-eight pounds on Mars would, on Earth, weigh—" Strauss paused interrogatively.

"One hundred pounds," Liankin informed, his attitude as free of condescension

consider as a patient father to a suffering child.

"Precisely," almost purred the scientist. "Just what was Mr. Lambkin's weight again, please, Dr. Caldwell?"

"A hundred and ninety pounds," supplied the surgeon.

"Ah!" snapped the professor. "Do you weigh about the same at home—on Mars—Mr. Lambkin?"

"Certainly."

"Which would make your weight—to your muscles—the equivalent of five hundred pounds here on Earth! Yet you move around agilely, you jump like a professional athlete, and throw men about as lightly as I would toss a ball. By all rights, you should scarcely be able to drag your own weight around! How do you account for that, my fine Martian fellow? How about the atmospheric density? The oxygen content? Why aren't your Martian lungs compressed under the pressure, or fairly burnt up by the high percentage of oxygen here on Earth? Do you think we are simpler?"

CHAPTER VII

Quit and Result

LANKIN gaped at the triumphant phantly chattering group in amazed bewilderment.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! What a trifling matter to be puzzling you. But you couldn't know, of course. I was dedicated to this mission as a child. From virtual infancy, I was brought up in a specially constructed laboratory on the southern edge of the Burning Desert, where all Earthly conditions were imposed on me. Never once was I permitted to experience the natural conditions prevailing upon my native planet.

"Hence, I am a full ten inches shorter in stature than the average adult Martian, due to the gravitational drag constantly applied to me. My frame is sturdier, my muscles thicker. In fact, I am more nearly like an Earthman than a Martian, although there is fundamentally little difference in our races. But I shall explain all of this and much more when I address your scientists."

Professor Strauss waved his hands in angry defeat.

"I give up. How can I do anything with a lunatic who seems to know science forward and backward, and then gives me a ridiculous answer like that? I can't check facts against such childish fabrications, Mr. Hartman."

"Do you imply that you doubt my veracity?" Llanckin demanded.

"No, not at all," soothed the publisher quickly, winking at the annoyed professor. "You simply confused the professor. It doesn't matter. That will be all, gentlemen. Send me your respective statements for your services, and I'm sure I needn't ask you to consider this entire matter confidential. Shayne, I'd like a word with you."

The board of examiners began to pack up their stuff, and Shayne called the desk for special porter service. While Llanckin watched this procedure with alert eyes, Shayne followed his employer to the kitchen of the suite.

"Now look, Shayne," the publisher stated earnestly to the reporter. "I see that it's not going to be easy to handle this nut. Is he deliberately going on with this hoax, or does he really believe that stuff?"

"Frankly, I don't know," admitted Shayne. "What difference does it make? Now that you've come to take over the nursing job, I'm going home."

"You're going to stay right here and guard that lunatic," retorted the publisher firmly. "He's smart enough to know how important that airship invention of his is. I want it! But, damn it, I'm not trying to steal it."

"I turned professional a long time ago, Mr. Hartman," replied the sports reporter. "I play games only for money."

"All right, you'll get it. Your job is to freeze tight to this idiot and keep everybody else away from him. Show him a good time. Throw him out. Draw him out. Do anything you have to, but get me an option on that ship and a chance to examine it. We've simply got to have that ship for America. Colonel Thompson will handle things at Washington. But first we've got to get our hands on that ship before any foreign power or agency has the chance. Understand!"

"I'm beginning to," Shayne replied. "And if you're in such a hurry, you'll get farther with him by staging that meeting he's hollering for."

HARTMAN could scarcely speak for a moment.

"And make the Star-Tribune the laughing stock of the world? Besides practically inviting every espionage agent in the country to nose in ahead of us? Now you're talking as crazy as this Liamkin fellow. No, we'll handle this quietly. It may take a little time and persuasion. You've got to gain his confidence. And heaven help you if you make a boobie. I want a daily report of your progress. I'm going over to talk to Colonel Thomlinson."

They returned to the drawingroom of the suite, where Shayne gestured at the handful of synthetic diamonds.

"What about these ice cubes?" he asked stiffly.

"I thought," spoke up Liamkin, "we could place them with some honest lapidary, to be cut and polished in Earthly style before disposing of them."

"That won't be necessary," vetoed Hartman. "Put them in the hotel safe, or in a deposit box for the present. As our guest, Mr. Liamkin, you will have no need for money or its equivalent."

"Just as you say," agreed Liamkin, in simple trust. "When do I address your body of scientists, Mr. Hartman?"

"It will take a few days to assemble them," evaded the publisher. "While you're waiting, just relax and enjoy yourself. Mr. Shayne will see to your slightest want. I presume your ship is safe, wherever it is?"

"Perfectly safe as long as I do not lose my control belt."

"I see," nodded Hartman, forbearing to press for information. "Good night, gentlemen. And, Shayne, don't forget what I said about watching our guest carefully."

"How can I forget?" asked Shayne in a flat voice. "It's lucky I'm not married."

When the publisher left, Liamkin turned a worried countenance to the reporter.

"I simply must isolate that elusive sense of humor, Louis," he said earnestly.

"I cannot over-emphasize its importance."

"Brother, you've got one and don't know it," Shayne advised. "I'll try to help you discover it. Suppose I take you to see a few of the current productions that're cluttering up the theaters under the quaint delusion that they are comedies. Come on, let's go to bed."

"Very well— You are kind to me, Louis, and I shall not forget," said Liamkin gratefully. "There is so much I must learn about Earth before I return to Mars. And—and, if it can be arranged, I would like to spend a little time in the company of Elaine Ellice. She affects me strangely."

"You shall, you shall," promised Shayne between clenched teeth. "Somebody else ought to suffer a little, and it won't hurt the glamour girl. She's just about your speed on the double talk. What have I ever done to deserve all of it?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Don't mention it. I'm just trying to think of a talker I can get here before breakfast to measure you for some clothes."

"You don't think mine are adequate?"

"Kid, they are more than adequate," Shayne assured him solemnly. "They are eloquent. I'm going to dream about them all night."

JOHN HARTMAN was conferring with Colonel Thomlinson. It was the conversation that resulted in the apparently inexplicable reversal of orders to Maurice Rydker.

But at that moment, another conference was taking place in a corner of the cocktail lounge of the Telcost Plaza. Messrs. Grouset and Putnam, of Rainbow Pellets, Inc., were busy on the scout.

"Yes," said Grouset, in answer to the unspoken question of his mild-looking but long-nosed companion. "He's here—in the regal suite. Hartman and some other men left just before you and I came in. There's nobody up there with him but that sports reporter. It cost me ten dollars to get that information from the night ball-captain. All we have to do now is get him out of here."

"All we have to do?" quavered Putnam. "Did you say all?"

"Practically all," amended Grosset, fending his brows and doubling his well-maintained fists. "Once we get him away from that dyspeptic, Shayne, the rest will be easy. Rainbow Pellets can offer him so much more than Three Dimensional that we'll dazzle him."

"And if we don't?"

"We'll string him along while our staff shoots pictures of him endorsing Rainbow Pellets. I've got those news-reel men planted at the Canary Club. The telecast equipment is set up and waiting in the Peacock Room of the Ritz-Astor. Between now and morning, we will get a million dollars' worth of advertising out of him, free. And then, if we can't handle him, we can call C.J. to close the deal in person."

Never had William Grosset voiced a truer prophecy.

"Yes, I know," said Putnam, his thin nose twitching like a rabbit's. "But how are you going to spirit him away from here?"

"Money, Mr. Putnam, unlocks many doors," Grosset explained. "You be ready to talk hard and fast to this Llamkin bird. If Shayne starts to interfere, just leave that reporter to me."

Putnam looked more like a rabbit than ever. Even his ears quivered, and his Adam's apple bobbed convulsively.

"I—I don't know just what to say," he protested weakly. "I don't think C.J. meant to go as strong as kidnapping."

"See here, Mr. Putnam," said Grosset in a terse voice. "There are a lot of things I don't go in for myself. But you heard the old man threaten to throw me out on my ear if I fail. You may have enough put away to retire on, but I haven't. I'm not going to have the can tied onto me over a crackpot stunt like this Meadowbrook business. We're going to nab this Llamkin guy if only to strike back at Hartman. Look what he did to us over his own telecast hookup on our honestly bought time. Besides, who said anything about kidnapping?"

"Nobody," chattered Mr. Putnam.

"All right. Swallow your drink and come on."

Quaking in his fufber-aven French-lut phoon, Ebenezer Putnam followed Rainbow Pellet's go-getter. And Bill



HARTMAN

Grosset was a bull when his ire was aroused. In this case, his ire and hire both were up and fighting. Grosset may have looked soft and affable, but that was just an external impression. Inside, he was harder and colder than refrigerated steel. He had had to fight out of the gutter to reach the first rung of the ladder to success. He still had a few marks and all the tricks of that brutal, ruthless battle.

UNKNOWN to Putnam, who knew almost everything his subordinate had been doing, Bill Grosset had been making plans and distributing largess since eight o'clock. Now, at eleven, it was time for a few of his arrangements to come to fruition.

He led the vice-president to the men's lounge in the first basement. A Telecast Plaza porter met them there. Without a word being spoken, he led them toward the luggage room. One of the freight elevators was waiting. On its floor stood a large wardrobe trunk.

"Get in," directed Grosset.

Putnam entered the elevator, pointing meekly at the trunk, which was open and empty.

"In case we have trouble," informed Grosset, "Llamkin got a free ride in a trunk. Don't look so troubled. We're not going to hurt anybody. Now listen carefully, Putnam. This freight elevator only goes to the top floor of the

hotel. We'll have to walk along a wing corridor and climb the stairs to the penthouse level. We'll come back the same way. You see, the idea is to get Llamkin out of the hotel without attracting attention or suspicion."

"How do we get into the regal suite?" was Mr. Putnam's natural problem.

"Like this," said Grosset, indicating the train bell-captain who stepped into the cage at that moment. "Get the keys, Flannigan?"

"Yes, sir," answered the captain, holding them up.

"Okay. Let 'er go, Powell. This little job is costing Rainbow Pellets five hundred fish, Putnam, and we don't



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know anything about these two men. It may mean their jobs. Better start keeping an expense account."

The two hotel employees exchanged looks, then stood in silence as the cage shot silently up to the top floor. Here Flannigan took charge. Powell locked the freight elevator and followed the others. In this order they traversed the corridor and mounted to the roof.

Flannigan led to the garden entrance of the vast penthouse and quietly inserted the key. The door opened and they filed in. They passed through the dark, deserted express elevator foyer. A second key job, and the suite itself was open to them.

"Pssst!" warned Flannigan. "There's a light in the bedroom on the right."

"Wait here," ordered Grosset, advancing into the gleam of the living room. "Come on, Putnam."

CHAPTER VIII

From Night Club—

JUST as they reached the middle of the room, there was a soft click. The place was flooded with light from the ceiling fixture. At the threshold of the room stood the bizarre figure of the man they sought. He was fully dressed.

"Llamkin!" exclaimed Grosset softly, while Putnam uttered a little yelp of alarm.

"Yes," answered the Kid from Mars. His keen eyes darted over the group, returning to the gassy advertising manager. "I remember you. You are the radio announcer I saw this afternoon."

"Wrong," said Grosset, shaking his head. He added significantly: "I am the man who paid for the announcing. You're thinking of Jack Bachelor. My name is Bill Grosset. Where is Shyne?"

"Asleep in his room. How did you get inside this apartment?"

"With the magic password 'money' and a couple of keys. I came to see you. This is Mr. Putnam, vice-president of the company."

"How do you do," said Llamkin, bowing. "Mr. Hartman sent you two gentlemen?"

"Yes," replied Grosset promptly. "He wants to confer privately with you. Can you go with us?"

"Certainly," said Llamkin agreeably. "Wait here and I will call Louie."

"Let him sleep," offered Grosset easily. "He needs the rest. You'll be back before he can get dressed."

"Perhaps that would be more considerate," agreed Llamkin trustfully. "I am ready."

Like a lamb, indeed, he turned out the light in his bedroom and accompanied them. The two hotel employees in the doorway stared in amazement.

"Powell," breathed the bell-captain,

"If you'd of told me they still grew this dumb, I wouldn't of believed you."

"Start talking Rainbow Pellets in an easy way," whispered Grosset, giving the vice-president a little push and covering the retreat personally.

"Ah, yes," gulped Putnam hesitantly. "I see you don't sleep well, Mr. Llamkin. You should take a Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pellet upon retiring."

"The novelty of my surroundings absorbs my attention. I can sleep or stay awake at will. I need no panacea."

"Ah, but the dreams induced by Rainbow Pellets make sleep a delight. We feel we are the benefactors of mankind. You really ought to make a trip through our laboratories and view our various processes. Why, a visit to our research department alone would open your eyes to the wonderful nature of our work."

"What a hell of a spiel!" muttered Grosset under his breath. "How did Putnam ever get to be vice-president?"

He didn't breathe easily until Llamkin relaxed the last door. Not a sound was aroused in the sports reporter's bedroom.

"Boy!" the bell-captain whispered. "If those pellets are that good, I think I'll take a few. Colored dreams ought to be something!"

"Thank you, Mr. Putnam," Llamkin was saying. He paced the little man down the stairs to the floor below. "I would indeed like to visit your plant."

"The dressing now," Grosset answered the bell-captain. "Come on."

Llamkin made no comment as he was hurried to the freight elevator and whisked to the basement. It had been much too easy. And Grosset found that out shortly.

From the basement, Powell conducted them to the steps leading up to the parking circle. Between Putnam and Grosset, Llamkin mounted to a closed car that waited with softly purring motor.

"Where is Mr. Hartman?" Llamkin asked.

"At the office of the Rainbow plant," stated Grosset promptly. "He asked us to show you some of our methods of advertising on the way. Promotion work, you know—far superior to Three Dimensional Pictures."

"We have nothing like that on Mars,"

replied Llamkin. "We don't seem to have any need for amusement."

"Now isn't that too bad," sympathized Grosset, helping his purloined guest into the car. "Head for the Canary Club, Mike."

THE Canary Club on East Fifty-third Street was a swanky night spot where people with social position went to be seen with heels, gamblers, racketeers, and glamour girls like Elaine Elliot. Tawdry and gaudily by day, at night the Canary Club had a glitter and glamour and fascination all its own.

This was the spot Grosset had chosen for flashlight photos and a newsworthy sequence to connect the Kid from Mars with Rainbow Pellets. There was only one slight flaw in his calculations, but he couldn't have foreseen that Maurice Rynder and Elaine Elliot had a mid-night reservation at the Canary Club.

The first whiff of trouble began at the hat-check room. Llamkin flatly refused to check his helmet.

"But, sir," said the head-waiter, after being called by a page. "I must insist. No gentleman enters the Canary dining room with a hat."

"I do," said Llamkin firmly, "or I don't enter."

"Very well," replied Emile, the head-waiter, drawing himself up in the dignity which had frozen greater personages than this garish actor. "There is no room. All the tables are taken."

"Now, here, Emile," said Grosset. "You know better than that. I reserved a table by phone. I spoke to you."

"Yes, sir, I know," Emile said doggedly. "But I cannot permit a hat, not even the—er—headgear of an actor who has come from the theater in costume."

There was a sudden flash of light. A photographer had snapped a picture of the group.

"Label that one 'The Kid from Mars refuses to enter the Canary Club until Emile produces proof that he takes Rainbow Pellets,'" ordered Grosset coolly. "Here, Emile." He thrust an ornate vial of opalescent pellets into the astounded head-waiter's hand. "Take this shot, Harry."

Again the flash and the click of a camera shutter.

"Label that one, 'Emile produces the proof,'" said Grosset. "Now, Emile, if you want us to release that second shot, you'd better get wine to yourself. Do we go in, or don't we?"

"The Kid from Mars?" exclaimed Emile. "Why didn't you tell me this meant publicity for the Canary Club, Mr. Grosset? But certainly! Come this way, gentlemen."

He turned to lead a personally conducted tour.

"I don't understand," protested Liankin.

"Neither do I," admitted Mr. Putnam dazedly. "C. J. would be crazy if he tried to fire Grosset. Come, Mr. Liankin."

Emile seated the three of them at the most conspicuous table in the dining room. Over in one corner, a floodlight blazed on and a pair of newwed cameramen began cranking away.

"I thought there was just to be a little filming of various celebrities to-night," apologized Emile apologetically. "I am so sorry, Mr. Grosset. I will see that you have every possible attention. Er—here is your vial of Rainbow Pellets."

He snapped his fingers. Two waiters came scurrying forward.

"Keep the pellets," said Grosset. "Have some pleasant dreams for a change. Sit here, Liankin. Send over the orchestra leader, Emile."

LAMKIN seated himself in the most designated chair, staring around him in wonder. The highly tailored orchestra conductor approached, and Grosset casually slipped him a crisp bill.

"Fifty bucks on your expense account, Putnam," he directed. "Order something for us. Maestro, bow about a nice announcement to the crowd! Just say that the Kid from Mars is here to find out what splendid entertainment it takes to keep call society out of bed—with a bottle of Rainbow Pellets in their hands."

For fifty dollars the maestro did an overwhelming job. A cow-eyed dibbante put down her drink and stared at the colorful Kid from Mars.

"For a dream like that," she mur-

mured ecstatically to her escort, "I'd take a hundred Rainbow Pellets."

"Oh, yeah?" returned her companion stolidly. He twisted his head and scowled at the handsome features of Liankin. "Well, if that nightmare makes a pass at you, I'll warn that silly tin hat down his throat."

That was no idle threat. Peter Van Horst, the Third, was three things. He was as tall as, and bulkier than, Liankin. He was a gridiron star, who happened to be in love with Gwendolyn Sumner. He was reaching that stage of intoxication known in the vernacular as practically belled. A bad combination for Gwendolyn to back, perhaps, but Gwendolyn was a stage ahead of her misadventurous boy-friend.

"Yes," she snapped back. "I think he is adorable."

Promptly Mr. Van Horst, the Third, lowered himself erect.

"So I'll amble over and just change his locks," he said negligently.

"No," the girl cried. "Peter, sit down, Peter!"

The swelling music of the orchestra covered her frantic cry. She rose to follow her burly escort among the tables and through the crowd that was rising to dance. Just then, Elaine Elliot and Maurice Ryder appeared at the entrance archway.

Completely unconscious of impending calamity, Grosset was earnestly capounding the glories of Rainbow Pellets to Liankin. Putnam sat nodding and smiling happily. It was the little man who first saw trouble coming. His smile froze on his face. He tried to speak and point at the same time. Either job would have required all his attention.

Peter Van Horst approached from the side. He snatched up a bumper of champagne from an ice bucket, raised it above his head. Viciously he brought it down with a crash on Liankin's turbaned helmet.

The bottle shattered. The carbonated beverage showered over Liankin's vivid clothes in a silvery spray. The force of the blow shoved his helmet down over his ears.

"Make a play for my girl, will you?" roared Van Horst. "I'll show you pretty

boys how to get penalized for being off-side."

He lunged forward to grasp his adversary by the shoulders. A shout of excitement arose and a woman screamed. Grosset and Putnam were too startled to move.

But Liamkin was not. A terrible expression of alarm on his face, he twisted to one side and darted erect. His chair stood between him and the angry Van Horst. His hands shot first to his head and readjusted his helmet. Then they ripped to his broad belt. He touched several buttons and dials in rapid succession.

The alarm on his features turned to relief that swiftly changed to anger. Van Horst kicked the chair out of his way and made another grab for the sallow Liamkin while he aimed a hay-maker.

Waiters came charging up. Patrons fell back out of the way in mounting hysteria. At the doorway, Elaine Elliot caught Rynder by the shoulder.

"Look!" she cried. "For heavens' sake, Maurice—look! There's the man whose publicity you've been claiming you had to kill!"

MAURICE RYNDER had only time enough to let out a bleat like a stricken goat. There wasn't time for anybody to do anything.

Liamkin daffily twisted away from the wild swing Mr. Van Horst uncocked at him. Then he leaned forward. Before the husky football star even finished his swing, Liamkin grabbed him by the neck and the crotch. He lifted him above his head and whirled swiftly. He actually hurled the heavier man at the liquor bar.

The involuntary projectile skimmed the top of the bar like a gull gliding over the Hudson. He flew onward to crash into a pyramid of bottles, glassware and paneled mirrors. For only two hundred and ten pounds of man, he did nearly a thousand dollars' worth of damage. And the nearest waiters, instead of halting, made the error of grabbing at Liamkin.

The Kid from Mars snatched up the ice-bucket and crowned the first. The second he sprawled across a table with



DR. FOLKSTONE

a back-handed swing. He grabbed up his chair to meet the attack of the third and fourth.

Now people were shouting and screaming. Miracles began to fly. Grosset never got out of his seat. A silver sugar bowl cracked him on the back of the head. He squashed his face on the table and let it stay there. Putnam, all but rigid with fright, managed to slide under the table.

Indiscriminately—like in the movies—all the males got into that fight, or started others of their own. The orchestra became involved when a flying hostile went through the bass drum. More waiters showed into the room.

Gwendolyn, the innocent cause of the entire affair, had fainted against a convention delegate from Terre Haute, who sat with a bottle of catsup turning down over his lap. His wife cowered beyond him, wringing her hands helplessly.

The reason for the fight had long been forgotten in the general chaos. All attention was untenderly focused on Liamkin.

Emile, like a good general, directed the attack from the safety of the bar. His strategy was so successful that it wrecked the Canary Club completely, reducing its costly fixtures to a heap of junk. Only the newswall men in the corner kept their heads and managed

to keep out of danger at the same time. They ground away at their cameras until the lights failed.

Screaming through the street, the riot squad arrived. In the middle of the dance floor, surrounded by wreckage and unconscious forms, the splintered remnant of a chair in his hand and master of all he surveyed, stood Llamkin, practically unscathed.

"He—him—the R-rainbow Pellet man!" shouted Emile to the bluesuits. "He has r-r-ruined the placid Ar-r-rest him!"

The red-faced sergeant advanced stolidly through the mess. His men were cautiously spreading out to flank him, riot guns in hand.

"Okay, buddy," said the sergeant to the victor of the fight. "Take it easy now or ya'll be takin' a trip to the hospital instead of the station."

"Oh, I'm not injured at all," said Llamkin gravely, dropping his fragmentary cudgel. "But I'm afraid a number of these queerly acting people are."

"Ar-r-rest him!" shrieked Emile.

"All right, all right," said Sergeant Reilly. "Holy Dempsy, what a scrap this must have been! What's it all about, Rainbow man?"

"I don't know," answered Llamkin. "Nobody bothered to inform me."

"Good heavens!" moaned Maurice Rynder in the anteroom to Emile. "I've got to telephone John Hartman."

CHAPTER IX

—To Night Court

WILBERFORCE MARTINEAU, city magistrate, was finishing his week on the night shift, and his disposition was sour. The judge was an able man, worthy of better things and in line for appointment to a Federal bench. In the meantime, even a jurist had to lead his family. So Judge Martineau made his circuit of the city courts and waited grumpily for better times.

Of all his highly unpleasant tasks, Martineau found the night courts most distasteful. Vagrants and drunks, de-

monic brawl and liquor, petty thievery and stew bums, juvenile delinquents and bores—but particularly the night courts reeked of booze. Judge Martineau was a teetotaler himself.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The sober judge was hurriedly closing his court so he could get home to a glass of hot milk and a slice of whole wheat toast.

Huddled down at the end of the front bench, his coat collar turned up about his ears and his slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, sat Frank Bronson, night court reporter for the Post-Times. He, too, was weary of the endless streams of cases flowing before the august presence, but at least he could doze—which he did. Cops and complainants, detectives and defendants, they all came and went, and nothing ever happened. Even the unusual upsurge of half a dozen persons being hauled into the courtroom did not arouse Bronson until the late justice began pounding with his gavel for order, then just for quiet.

Standing before the high desk of the judge was a jolly looking group. Others, some of them pretty important, crowded behind the railing. A squad of bluesuits herded the yelling mass.

"Order! Quiet! Silence!" roared the judge.

Bronson snapped awake and took a good look.

"Holy smokes!" he gulped. "Peter Van Horst. Gwendolyn Sumner. Emile of the Canary. Grouzet and Putnam of Rainbow Pellets. And the maniac of Meadowbrook. And behind the railing—Hell, I'm seeing things. Elaine Ellice and Maurice Rynder!"

He certainly was seeing things, but the things were true. Out and scratched in a dozen places, which had been treated by a police surgeon, Peter Van Horst, the Third, was trying to climb over the judge's desk. He mumbled names of importance and large sums of money in the same breath.

Head bound up like that of a swami, Bill Grouzet, white of face and sick, wobbled on his feet and tried to think his way out of this one. Gwendolyn was in tears. Emile was sliding around the floor, waving and shouting wildly. Putnam was wringing his hands and

switching his long nose helplessly.

Only Llamkin seemed at all calm. He was taking in the entire scene with wide and curious eyes.

"Silence!" roared the judge again. The hubbub died slowly. "What's the charge against these people, Sergeant?"

"Drunk and disorderly, your honor," answered Sergeant Reilly. "Sabotage and wrecking the Canary Club."

"No, no, no!" broke in Emile, pointing dramatically at Llamkin. "Only that one. He has r-u-i-n-e-d the Canary!"

"And who are you?" demanded the judge coldly.

LYMILE was amazed. "I am Emile!" he said. "Head-waiter of the joint," explained the sergeant. "He's protesting the charges."

"Get down off my rostrum!" bellowed the judge at young Van Horst, who had finally clambered to his elbow. "What's your name?"

"I just told you," said Van Horst, nervously springing down. "I'm Peter Van—"

"Don't give your right name, you fool!" yelled Bill Grouzet.

"Peter Vanderbilt," finished Van Horst lamely.

"And who are you?" demanded the judge, fixing his cold eyes on Grouzet. "His lawyer?"

"I'm Bill Grouzet, of Rainbow Pellets, Incorporated," answered the advertising manager firmly. "That fellow was drunk and started all the trouble for no reason at all. But he comes of a good family, and there's no reason for stirring up a lot of—"

"Really?" said the judge witheringly. "This court recognizes no favorites. All men are equal before the law—at least, in my court. What's your name, young woman?"

"You mean me?" quavered Miss Summer.

But Peter Van Horst had caught on thoroughly.

"Her name is Nelly Gwynn, your honor."

"Of historical fame, no doubt," said his honor acidly. "And who are you, little man with the nervous nose?"

"Klennzer Putnam," confessed the

little man, trying to conquer his nose. "I am the first vice-president of Rainbow Pellets, Incorporated."

"And who are you?" asked Judge Martinson of Llamkin. "The spirit of the Rainbow?"

"My name is Llamkin," answered the Kid from Mars politely.

"Give your full name," droned the voice of the police clerk.

"X-two-three-Z-four-s-e-v-e-n-n-i-n-e-eight-nine," stammered Llamkin.

"He didn't ask for your address or telephone number," snapped the judge, baring his gravel.

"I gave you only my name."

The judge glared with red eyes. Frank Bronson leaped to his feet and mounted the dais to whisper in the magistrate's ear. The judge's eyes popped and then narrowed as he nodded grimly.

"I see. But nobody is going to make a mockery of my court to exploit a commodity. So you were drunk and disorderly, eh? Drunk, all of you! Disgraceful! Wrecked the Canary Club, did you? Well one of you marauders kindly state the case before I remand every last one of you to the clink without bail!"

"Your honor, I'm putting up bail for Miss Gwynn and myself," spoke up Van Horst quickly, digging into his pocket. "How much is it?"

"State your case," Sergeant Reilly prodded the excitable Emile. "Make it snappy. The judge is getting sore."

Emile rushed to the front of the magistrate's desk and proceeded to paint a vivid word picture. It was half-true, half-false, thoroughly garbled, although thoroughly voluble. While he was speaking, Maurice Rylander endeavored to attract the attention of the gravely listening Llamkin. He was threatened with expulsion by a barly officer.

The head-waiter didn't know Llamkin, and he was well acquainted with the Van Horst patronage. The result was inevitable. The judge turned a cold eye upon the outpour.

"How do you plead to this charge, Rainbow Llamkin?"

Bill Grouzet charged in quickly to explain the other side of the story.

Bang! The magisterial gavel cut him off.

"You will have ample opportunity to state your own case, Mr. Grouart," said his honor jolly. "One more interruption out of you, and you will be fined for contempt of court."

"But, please, your honor," protested Grouart. "This has all been an unfortunate mistake. It means millions to Rainbow Pellets. I tell you we're innocent, but I'll guarantee satisfactory settlement to everybody, and—"

"Which has nothing to do with a trial in my court," interrupted his honor, utterly unmoved by this impassioned plea. "Now, Mr. Liankin?"

Bill Grouart had sense enough to know when he had run up against an immovable object.

"Very well, your honor. May I at least have my legal right to use a telephone?"

"Take this post to the ante-chamber and let him call a lawyer," the magistrate ordered a bluecoat. "Then return him to the court."

But Grouart didn't want a lawyer. He got in touch with none other than Charles J. Keene. When he had the vice president of Rainbow Pellets on the wire, it took him less than two minutes to outline the situation. Mr. Keene's voice roared back at him.

"Get back into that courtroom and block that infernal magistrate! Demand an adjournment of court long enough to get him into his private room so you can explain things to him. Tell him the truth. I'll send Addison and Blake down there right away to help unsnarl the legal tangle. Of all the dumb things—"

"But the judge won't listen to me," protested Grouart. "The next crack out of me, and I get fined for contempt."

"Get back in there and stall then!" bellowed Mr. Keene. "I'll be down myself as quick as I can get there."

Back in the courtroom, Liankin was at last answering the charge.

"I don't quite follow your quaint legal procedure—if this is a legal proceeding. But I think I am being accused of wrong-doing. In that conclusion correct?"

Judge Martineau snapped forward, clutched the gavel like a mace.

"Young man, I'll slap you into jail in two minutes for your impudence. Have you a license for this street advertising stunt of yours? Well, have you?"

"I beg your pardon. Am I advertising anything? I was under the impression that I was being shown what advertising is. Mr. Putnam and Mr. Grouart were explaining this odd earthly custom of advertising a quasi-medical product when the inebriated young man yonder attacked me without the slightest warning."

"Are you denying that you were drunk yourself?" demanded the judge scathingly.

"Why should I deny what was never asked me?" said Liankin earnestly.

Bang! "Answer the original question! Guilty or not guilty?"

"Hey, wait!" came the high voice of Maurice Rynder from beyond the railing. Breaking away from the clanking hand of a policeman, he rushed through the gate. Elaine Elliot followed on his heels. "I was just entering the club with Miss Elliot when the trouble started. Liankin is not to blame. I saw the whole thing. I demand that I be summoned as a witness!"

THE judge was beginning to glower wildly. He banged his gavel violently and turned his gaze on the new disturbance.

"Who are you?" he snarled politely.

"Maurice Rynder, vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures, and personally acquainted with the accused man. He is employed by Three Dimensional Pictures. I can vouch for his honesty and sobriety."

"You can what?" roared the judge. "Why, the man smells like a distillery right now!"

"That's the bottle of champagne that young fool broke over his head," stated Rynder. "He grabbed it up, positively unopened, and crowned Liankin. If it hadn't been for the helmet, it'd be a murder case instead of a night club riot you would be trying."

"He's lying!" cried Putnam. "Liankin doesn't work for Three Dimen-



The crowd was puzzled by the strangeness of Laramie's appearance (Edgar, 1)

sional Pictures. He is under contract with Rainbow Slender Vitamin Pellets, Incorporated. It's all our idea. That practical picture concern is trying to steal our stunt."

This was the first explanation Maurice Rynder had heard of the incomprehensible affair. He whirled indignantly on the speaker and shook his fist under the little man's long nose.

"So that's the dirty snake-in-the-grass business? You kidnaped Laramie away from Louis Shayne! Or did you bribe Shayne? Trying to use him to exploit your crazy pills, and making all this nonsense that will ruin his value for Three Dimensional."

"Oh, ruin him? Snake-in-the-grass?" shouted Putnam angrily. Visitors of the ponderous Mr. Keene stiffened his

backbone. "You are the snakes! On the very telecast time we bought, you exploited Three Dimensional Pictures. Rainbow Pellets has a strong case, and I can assure you that we are going to sue for damages."

It took four minutes to separate the two little vice-presidents. Judge Martinuzzi banged readily for order.

Miss Gwendolyn Sumner by now had sobered sufficiently to renew her allegiance to her wounded hero, Mr. Peter Van Horst. She sprang to her feet and pushed forward to the space in front of the magistrate's desk.

"That man is lying!" she repeated, pointing at Maurice Rynder. "Your honor, this — this Flash Gordon newspaperer is to blame for the whole thing. He almost murdered my escort.

Look for yourself. The police surgeon had to take a dozen stitches and use codex and gobs of tape and bandage, and—"

Elaine Effort moved sinuously forward. She gripped the younger girl's wrist and jerked her around.

"You're the bar, you silly, drunken, old deb!" she shrieked. "I saw it all. That big bruiser you call an escort is guilty of assault and battery, mayhem, and attempted murder!"

"Oh!" cried Greenholme. "Oh! How dare you call Peter Van Horst, the Third, a big bruiser? Oh!" And she aimed a wild swing at the gorgeous Elaine.

Elaine blocked the blow with the ease of professional practice. She brought her beaded vanity bag down on Miss Summer's head so hard that the post-deb saw the lights and heard the music of her coming out half two seasons back. She let out a scream of rage and charged to take up the gauntlet.

Two more bluecoats wallowed in to put the stopper on this shrieking angle.

CHAPTER X

Freedom for All

THEY now the courtroom was a corner of bedlam. Spectators were hustling in from various sources to hear the case. Frank Bronson was writing like mad at the clerk's table. Then he made a dive for the telephone, and Peter Van Horst clamped down on him.

"No, you don't, you sneak!" shouted the Society Masher. "Call up any newspaper at all and I'll twist your head off."

Judge Martineau was darting his desk with hammer like blows of his instrument of office. His face was purple, going toward black, with outraged dignity. Police officers were racing from all directions. Sergeant Reilly practically had to sit on Emilie to prevent him from attacking everybody impartially.

It was Liankin who quelled the riot.

"Your honor," he cried in his vibrant, carrying voice. "I still do not comprehend what goes on. But am I to infer

that full payment for the damage inflicted at the Canary Club will straighten out this tangle?"

"It will straighten out everything but the charge against you," replied the judge. "How do you plead?"

"I plead that you release all these—these excited persons. I will gladly reimburse everybody for everything."

"Then you admit your culpability!" roared the judge.

"Not at all. I am unhappy to see all this unhappiness, which I still do not understand. But I came to Earth on a mission of peace. If I can help in this present emergency, I'll be only too glad to do so."

"And just what is your security to make good five thousand dollars' worth of damage?" demanded the judge in ominous tones.

Liankin, in faint contempt, pulled a small pouch from his belt. He unfolded it to spill a fortune in uncut diamonds on the desk.

"The smallest of these will be more than enough," he said soberly. "I give it without hesitation."

Judge Martineau's eyes bulged, for his hobby was precious stones.

"Blue diamonds?" he gasped. "Uncut stones?"

He snatched up one faintly glowing lump and held it to his eye, staring at the light as he circled his other hand around it. Slowly he lowered his hands and brought his attention back to the now silent group before him.

"These are apparently genuine," he said. "Where did you get them?"

"I brought them from Mars," answered Liankin.

"Smuggled in?" exclaimed the judge, his face growing hard with suspicion. "Undeclared valuables! Seized directly from the mines in the first place, no doubt." The Federal appointment seemed suddenly nearer to the zealous magistrate.

"They were not mined," said Liankin. "They were made."

"A likely story," replied the judge. "Because of the women involved in this Canary Club affair, I assess fines of ten dollars apiece and dismiss the case. As for you, Liankin, what's-your-name, I remind you to jail on the charge of

possessing smuggled, uncut diamonds. You will be held for investigation by the United States Customs Department. This property will be retained as evidence."

"Holy hell!" groaned Bill Grosset. "Why did all this have to happen to me?"

THE floor trembled as a bulky weight came stampeding along the central aisle. Charles J. Keene, dwarfing a pair of lawyers, had arrived.

"Here, here, your honor!" he called out. "Don't dismiss this case yet. You can't hold these men without bail. I demand to know the charges against them. I will go bond for them. What—"

"And who the devil are you?" interrupted Judge Martineau in his most majestic voice.

"I am Charles J. Keene, president of Rainbow Pellets. I demand my right as a property-holder to go bail. I demand that you assess a fine which I will pay here and now. I demand that you quash this entire ridiculous proceedings! I demand—"

"Hold everything!" shouted a new voice from the rear of the room. Every head twisted—even that of the Bullish Keene.

John Hartman and Colonel Henry Thomlinson were hastening into the courtroom. Trailing them was an angry looking sports reporter by the name of Louis Stuyne.

Bang! Bang! Bang! In a frenzy of juridical rage, Judge Martineau beat feebly against the ruling clamor from all sides. Everybody was talking and yelling at once. The gathering inside the railing was swelling to the size and violence of a mob. Only Lambskin remained calm. Standing against the judge's desk, hemmed in on all sides, he watched developments in grave-eyed amazement.

The abused gavel splintered. The judge began pounding with both fists to gain attention. Only the appearance of nightsticks in the hands of officers halted the tumult.

"And so, Mr. Charles J. Keene," the judge continued shouting. "You admit being the employer and backer of this

diamond smuggler, do you?"

"Diamond smuggler?" bellowed Keene. "What are you talking about?"

The meek Putnam finally gained his side and ear.

"That's right, C.J.," he squeaked. "This Lambskin fellow has a sackful of uncut diamonds that he smuggled into the United States from somewhere."

Keene's eyes threatened to squeeze out of his head. He envisioned a thousand kinds of complications all in the bulging of an eye. His color receded and his jaw dropped. But he recovered himself instantly.

"What diamond smuggler are you talking about?" he demanded of the judge on the bench. "I came here to free Putnam and Grosset, two valuable members of my organization. Get busy, Addison, Blake! What did I hire your firm for, anyhow?"

"I am referring to this—or—rainbow trout who calls himself Lambskin," grated the judge. "Evidence has already been offered that indicates—"

"Who? That nut?" The president of Rainbow Pellets pointed an angry indignation and surprise. "I never saw the man before. I know nothing whatever about him."

"That's the smartest statement you ever made in your entire career, Keene," said John Hartman in a grim voice. "Are you swearing to that? You've made no attempt to kidnap, hire, lure, or bribe Lambskin?"

"Are you mad, Hartman?" demanded Keene virtuously. "I don't know the first thing about him."

Colonel Thomlinson climbed the dais and bent over to murmur in the distraught magistrate's ear.

"Accept that statement, Judge Martineau," he advised crisply. "Fine them and clear the courtroom."

JUDGE MARTINEAU stared at the influential colonel with glaring eyes. Here was one man whose name he didn't have to ask for. Colonel Thomlinson could make or break him.

"But—but, Colonel Thomlinson," he muttered incoherently, indicating the pile of bluish-gray pebbles before him. "I can't— That is, this Lambskin— These diamonds—smuggled. I can't—"

"Get rid of the night club crowd, quickly," explained the colonel. "We'll take up Lambkin's case afterward."

The judge reached for his gavel. It was no longer there. He finally pounded with his inkstand. The ink spilled over his hand and desk. When he banged the stand into the puddle, it splashed, of course. Blindly he put his hands in the mess and leaned forward tensely.

"Charges dismissed against all but Lambkin!" he grated hoarsely. "Sergeant, clear the court!"

Emile let out a wail. "But the re-ruined Casar-r-y! What about the damages?"

"Get out," said Hartman, grabbing the head-waiter's shoulder. "Take these drunks with you. I'll fix up your damages."

Bussacate pompously began clearing the court. Charles J. Keene halted in front of his advertising manager.

"You're fired, Grosset!" he stated angrily.

"He is not fired," contradicted Lambkin, stepping forward. "Make one move to oust Mr. Grosset, and I will appeal to the peculiar laws of your courts for redress. Mr. Grosset was acting under your orders when he requested me to accompany him. I will not see him suffer for it."

"What?" blurted Keene. "You—how—bah?"

"You heard me," said Lambkin in cold disgust. "Mr. Grosset, while I do not approve of your tactics, I admire your spirit. Those pictures you made at the Canary Club, you have my permission to use them as you wish. They belong to you, not to Rainbow Pellets."

"You have pictures?" demanded Keene of his advertising manager.

"I had everything in the bag," growled Mr. Grosset, "until that hateful Van Horst, started the fight."

"And we can use them?" Keene urged Lambkin.

"Mr. Grosset may use them," corrected Lambkin.

"Let's get back to the point, Grosset," beamed the president. "I spoke hastily. I apologize. What were you saying?"

"I said," replied Bill Grosset promptly, "that I've got a headache so

Rainbow Pellet will ever ease. Perhaps a salary raise might."

"I can cure it," agreed Mr. Keene.

"So long, Lambkin," said Grosset. "All I can say is that, nuts or not, you're a swell egg. It's been fun knowing you."

"Not so fast you two!" said John Hartman harshly. "Try to capitalize on this man's ignorance one inch, and I'll investigate a law suit that will turn Rainbow Pellets into poison."

"You're too late to kill the publicity row," said Louis Shayne. "Frank Bronson of the Post-Times docked out of here as we came in. Kid, what did this Grosset do—hypnotize you?"

"Not at all," answered Lambkin. He explained, concluding: "It all seems juvenile to me, but if my endorsement will help Grosset, I see no reason for not giving it to him."

"Let 'em go, Mr. Hartman," advised Shayne. "They won't dare use any of the stuff they have until Lambkin gets clear of this Federal charge."

WYLAINE ELLIOT stared at Lambkin with a hurt look in her black eyes. The man was utterly inexplicable to her.

"So you're a publicity agent, after all," she said bitterly.

Lambkin opened his mouth to protest, but his attention was called back to the judge's bench. Colonel Thomson had been talking with purpose and to the point. He had also signed a bond for the confused Judge Martinson.

"Here, Mr. Lambkin," said the magistrate. "Take your incut diamonds back. I don't understand any single part of this entire mess. But Colonel Thomson vouches for you, and that is enough for me. Case is dismissed—or—I mean postponed. Court is adjourned. I'm going home and take an Alka-broms."

"Perhaps you had better let me take charge of these stones," suggested Hartman. "Then there won't be any more trouble over them."

"Gladly," agreed Lambkin, turning the pouch over to the publisher.

"The stones came in handy at that," commented Colonel Thomson.

"They spiked Kome's guns. We won't hear any more from Rainbow Pollats."

"But the damage has been done," growled Hartman. "Now, see here, Liankin. You are going back to that hotel with Shayne, and you're going to stay with him. Understand? You do exactly what he tells you to do. Don't even talk to anybody unless you ask Shayne first. With the counsel of Weidner, Strauss, and Caldwell, I think we can clean this mess up at a preliminary hearing. But I don't want any more nonsense."

"Mr. Hartman, I am not here to publicize Three Dimensional Pictures, either," protested Liankin. "I am simply waiting for you to assemble your servants so I can—"

"You bet you're not!" agreed Colonel Thomlinson in his deep voice. "You sit tight while I arrange a meeting between you and certain authorities in Washington."

* * *

Down the street, after the last principals left the night court, an immaculately clad gentleman by the name of Dr. Percival Polkstone stepped into an all-night drugstore. He went into a telephone booth. He dialed a number, got a response, and spoke.

"Grown? This is Polkstone. Colonel Thomlinson just came to night court to get Liankin out of a Federal smuggling charge and a five-thousand-dollar damage suit for wrecking the Canary Club."

"Ah!" came back the voice of the managing head of the Mammoth Mercantile Importing Company. "So! It is that important, eh? Very well, we will lay our plans. Transfer your attention from Thomlinson to the inventor."

CHAPTER XI

Getting Nowhere Fast

AFTER that wild nightmare, Louis Shayne had "day-jitters" for the rest of the week. The first three days, particularly, were tough. He had his hands full keeping Liankin pacified

and while he worked off the swarm of reporters, quacks and rubber-necks who tried to get to the Kid from Mars.

Inside of seventy-two hours Liankin was receiving as much mail as a moderately successful cinema star. Shayne had a temporary secretary sent over from Hartman's main office to handle it—a man, because Liankin apparently was unsympathetic to women, and vice versa. The secretary was installed in a hastily arranged office in the elevator foyer where he intercepted all mail and messages.

Dozens of letters solicited funds for every conceivable purpose. Seven invitations asked him to speak before clubs, besides half a dozen society invitations, two tentative offers of advertising jobs, three proposals of marriage, and one official document from the United States Government. This was an Immigration Department request for Mr. Khidmar Liankin to show proof of American citizenship or, if foreign, to prove lawful entry.

Shayne got rid of that headache by turning the matter over to John Hartman. Through Colonel Thomlinson, the reporter knew, the technicality could be handled in Washington. It was really a shame, Shayne admitted to himself, to kill all this swell publicity. But the Kid from Mars had persisted in his denial of being the agent of any nationally known product or the emissary of any foreign power. Nobody stopped forward to claim him after the Rainbow Rascos. There was plenty of reason to play him down now. So the sports reporter clamped the iron hand of censorship on telephones, telegram, telecast, mail, and personal callers, while he strove to entertain and quiet his charge.

Needless to say, Liankin didn't see any of this correspondence. Shayne brawled with relief when the flood slackened in a few days and he could dismiss the special secretary. It was a hectic period for the harassed Mr. Shayne.

Nor was this all. Liankin talked him dry on every subject about which the reporter had heard even a rumor. They reached an impasse only when Shayne, exhausted and crowded into a

corner of ignorance, resorted to a wise-crack to get out of the cul-de-sac.

This irrelevance never failed to puzzle Llamkin, who approached the most insignificant matter with the solemnity of an owl. At the same time, it was a constant source of amazement to the cynical reporter how much his companion knew in the abstract and yet how little he seemed to understand emotionally. If his mind had not been so alert and brilliant, Shayne would have called it bucolic naiveté. Actually it was as though Llamkin had studied life, people, history, and progress exhaustively, but isolated in some monastery.

Hinting about the revolutionary type of aircraft which had landed Llamkin at Meadowbrook, Shayne made no progress at all. It was not that Llamkin objected to talking on the subject or retreated suspiciously whenever Shayne mentioned it. On the contrary. But he always got to babbling some Martian nonsense that had the angry reporter completely at sea in no time.

The closest Shayne ever got to an intelligible description of the stratosphere craft was the morning Llamkin turned from the window. He had been staring down at the motor cars crawling like ants on the street far below. He started a discussion on the development of transportation by man.

THE listened attentively. Shayne gave a brief condemnation of the subject from the crude sledges of cavemen down through the invention of the wheel, the domestication of animals, the development of steam and motors and, finally, the wing, the aerial propeller, and radial engines. Now was water navigation neglected. Shayne had to describe it from the first Sailing log, to Diesel-motored battleships and submarines.

Whenever the reporter faltered or groped, Llamkin immediately prompted him with a shrewd question. It was with difficulty that Shayne rejected the sneaking idea that his listener was slyly ribbing him. But what lover of humor, from satire to horseplay—even a nut—would submit to a three-hour discourse about which he knew more than

his lectures, just for the sake of a joke?

"It is remarkable!" exclaimed Llamkin at last, his fine blue eyes almost sparkling. His firm lips were parted in his nearest approach to a smile that Shayne had yet seen. "If I had had the slightest doubt of the common origin of Earthmen and Martians, this would have made me discard it. Step for step, making allowances for the different planetary environments, you have related the history of Martian man's conquest of transportation—as far as Earthmen have advanced, of course. Or have they gone further?"

"So that's your explanation of how you know so much about it."

Shayne smiled cynically. "No wonder Professor Strauss gave up. Are you kidding me, Kid? You know damned well we haven't got any further—until you came along with your new stratosphere ship. We've only been experimenting with rocket propulsion, so far. You've solved it."

"Oh, yes, we solved rocket propulsion long ago," Llamkin dismissed the subject casually. "But you labor under a misapprehension, Louis. My vehicle is not a stratosphere rocket craft. It is a space ship."

"Grab your hats, boys," said Shayne aloud. "Here we go again. All right, it's a space ship. I don't give a damn what you call it. But what makes it go?"

"Not rockets. The problem of weight and bulk of fuel precluded that."

"You mean you haven't reached atomic energy yet?" asked the reporter in mock surprise.

"Of course we have, long ago. Practically all machinery on Mars is powered by atomic motors. But the navigation of space, Louis, requires more than blind energy. There is the insurmountable law of gravitation, not to mention three-dimensional navigation between worlds that have spatial movements of their own. Briefly, the principle by which my ship functions is the power to reverse the poles of gravity."

"Instead of a given planet attracting a body thus magnetized, it repels it. By setting my gravitators against the pull of the planet I am on, and toward any, given celestial body, I can navi-

gate my vessel through space, I change my variables occasionally to guide my course. You grasp the essential idea, do you not?"

"I do not," said Shayne bluntly. "Why the rockets, then?"

"For emergency, though I didn't need them then. When I show you the interior of my ship, I can explain more fully. I think I shall extend you, for purely personal reasons, an invitation to accompany me to Mars. Of course I will return you to Earth. Until then, I can best describe my ship's motive power by saying that I use the force of gravity for flight, building up varying speeds by the various combinations of gravity repellents and attractants on my control keyboard."

"THANKS for the ride," said Shayne dryly. "You mean the gimmicks on your belt?"

"No. My belt merely raises and lowers the ship short distances by remote control. The keyboard is invisibly set on an Earth constancy right now. The nearest comparison I can think of, at the moment, is that it faintly resembles the backs of manuals on your larger pipe organs."

"Music of the spheres," commented Shayne ironically.

"In a manner of speaking, yes," agreed Llamkin gravely. "Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly—and I am the reincarnation of Sir Isaac Newton."

"I beg your pardon?" Llamkin was immediately puzzled. "How do you arrive at that extraneous conclusion? Isaac Newton was the first Earthman

to propose the law of gravity. He corresponds to the Martian scientist, Kead Dianed, who lived nearly thirty thousand tenacicks ago. That would be approximately fifty thousand of your Earth years. But I do not understand your deduction."

"Reincarnation . . . Let me see . . . That comes under the head of theism . . . It fits into one of your Earthly theologies . . . Reincarnation—transmigration of souls—Buddhism! But, Louis, I fail to see the connection. Do you subscribe to the teachings of this Quaterna Siddhartha, surnamed Buddha, who—"

"Skip it," retorted Shayne. "It's a family secret."

The arrival of the tailor with a complete outfit, including half a dozen suits and a flamboyant tuxedo in pastel shades, rescued them from the theosophic morass into which they had floundered. And all Shayne had learned about the stratosphere ship was a generalization on gravity and an invitation to make a sound trip to Mars. A hell of a report to submit to John Hartman, an offensively militant realist.

Llamkin became enthralled with Earthly sartorial splendor. He submitted to the fanning of the tailor, who wanted to be satisfied with the final fitting before he would take his departure. Llamkin's interest in garters, suspenders, cuff links, and other trappings, was lively. The tailor began volunteering fragments of information on such details as how buttons came to be on coat sleeves, and why the lapel was notched. When at last he took his stayed bill from Shayne for Hartman

[Turn page]

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and departed, Llamkin turned to the reporter.

"Interesting," he said. "A well-informed man. Are all the tradesmen as well versed in the history of their professions?"

"That crankpot probably reads the liquor ads for his dope. Or maybe the 'Strange if You Believe It' feature in the papers."

"Liquor ads? Dope? That, of course, would be the quaint slang phraseology which we discussed as an odd offshoot of the English language, but—"

"Don't go into a tail-spin. I'm sorry I mentioned it. Climb into that haunting dinner outfit again. We have a double date today, you know—a marriage and then a dinner engagement with Elaine Elliot. We won't have time to change later."

"Oh, yes, that comedy-drama you are going to show me. And then, the charming Elaine."

"Yash," granted Shayne sourly. "This will be your first real night out since that girlish escapade with Bill Grouzet. I want you to behave."

"I'm sorry about that," said Llamkin as he obeyed instructions. "Perhaps it is because I do not understand your way of life that I came so much trouble."

"Let it lay," Shayne replied wearily. "You'll see real people this time. Maybe you'll get it. Just want you to keep trying."

The reporter proceeded then with his own dressing. He returned his attention to his companion in time to see Llamkin struggling manfully with his final adjustments.

"Here," said Shayne impatiently. "Let me tie that bow for you. The guy who invented bow-ties should have strangled himself with it before springing it on us. And take off that Buck Rogers belt! Haven't you done enough to make yourself ridiculous, trotting around like a one-man band?"

Llamkin gulped in dismay. "But, Louis, I don't dare let this belt out of my possession. I am willing to lay aside my customary attire—even my induction belt. But I must guard my ship control."

"Where the hell is that crazy ship of yours? And don't tell me it's just drifting around in the stratosphere, waiting for you to call it down."

"Exactly. And if I lost this belt, I would be lost indeed."

"Well, you can't wear it, and that's flat. How about disconnecting it so nobody else can monkey with it?"

"But suppose somebody removed it?" Llamkin asked.

"We'll lock it in the wall safe. Or hide it under your mattress."

"That is an odd idea, but it gives me a good one," said Llamkin, his eyes brightening. "I can hide it. Wait here."

He hurried into his own bedroom. He was gone only a minute. When he returned, a couple of his pockets bulged slightly. But he was missing the belt, apparently.

"That's better," approved the reporter. "You're not fooling me, though. You've got the damned thing on under your clothes. Our tailor friend would have a heart-ache if he could see you, but at least it's out of sight."

CHAPTER XII

Experiment in Laughter

THE show they went to was a flop. Shayne had already seen it, and Llamkin couldn't detect anything funny in it.

It was a disgusted sports reporter who led his companion into the cocktail lounge, on the mezzanine of the Telecast Plaza, at seven o'clock.

However, the pride and joy of Three Dimensional Pictures was waiting for them, and not too happy about the whole thing. She was talking with Maurice Rynder, but she wasn't complaining. She had her orders from Maurice, and Maurice had had his from John Hartman.

Neither of them recognized Shayne's companion for a moment.

"Why, Mr. Llamkin?" beamed the fat but immaculate vice-president suddenly. "You look elegant. Shayne

certainly is the man to show you the ropes. Eh, Shayne?"

"He's got me hanging onto them," growled the reporter. "Good evening, Miss Elton. So we meet again. A positively minute world, isn't it?"

Elaine was lovely in one of those strapless evening gowns of pale blue and gold which display perfect shoulders and make men hold their breaths. Her makeup was just right. Her costume must have caused herself and the French hair-dresser of the Plaza salon a couple of hours of exquisite agony. Her general ensemble was marvellous. Yet Elaine gave the reporter a very ugly look out of her Roland blossom eyes. (The smile was Liankin's.)

"So I have you to thank for this charming evening, Mr. Shayne," she murmured in a voice that dripped sweet poison.

"Some people," observed Shayne, glancing at Rynder, "talk too much. We all have our cross to bear. Maybe a round of cocktails will lighten the burden. Will you order, Rynder?"

Liankin had kept his attention turned solely to the girl. The significance of the by-play escaped him. As he bowed before her, he spoke only two words, and then simply repeated them.

"You're lovely," he said. "You're lovely!"

With those words he again threw that spell over them, that bewitching something they had felt at Meadowbrook days before. Distinctly there was a charm about the Kid from Mars that wasn't met at every buffet-kitchen of café society.

On the magical wings of the music from the concealed orchestra—they were playing "Bardant"—all four of them were transported to the plane where all things are possible and all dreams come true.

For the first time in her smart and sophisticated young life, Elaine Elton experienced a distinct heart throb. It didn't frighten her until late that night.

Alone, save for her maid and her companion-secretary, in the imperial suite which was the west penthouse, she prepared for bed. Sitting before her dressing table and brushing her glossy auburn hair, she came to her



sense. She stared with horror at her reflection in the mirror.

"Now what in the name of hell was the matter with me? Was I hypnotized? Falling under the phony spell of a cracked inventor just because he looks like a Greek god and talks like a Persian poet?"

But that, of course, came much later. Just now she felt as though she were suddenly strolling in a busy garden of enchantment. She waded through gorgeously queer flowers, was dazzled by exotic and exciting perfumes, while jeweled nightingales sang heart-shaking threnodies of love and despair.

She saw this strange man, Liankin, with clearer eyes than when she had first beheld him in his ostrich garb on the polo field. Yet, paradoxically, he seemed less substantial and distinct.

TWO rounds of cocktails and four courses of dinner came and passed into oblivion with only Shayne and Rynder being any the wiser—or poorer. The music shifted from Johann Strauss to Victor Herbert. It was impossible to make small talk with Liankin, and Elaine frankly said so.

"Then don't," he answered softly. "I wouldn't understand, anyway. I try so hard, but things of the lighter vein escape me, perhaps for that very

reason. Yet I am not despondent nor gloomy. I simply do not understand how to isolate and analyze that quality for which I seek."

"You certainly are an unusual man, Mr. Lambdin," she said, a trifle unsteadily. "What on Earth makes you so sober?"

"Nothing on Earth," he assured her earnestly, his melodic voice blending with the dreamy background of the music. "It is the heritage of ten thousand years. Think of it, Elaine! Imagine a world, strangely different from this, and yet beautiful in its own alien way. Think of a whole race of grave, intelligent people who are far advanced in the arts and sciences. They have advanced so far that certain fundamental qualities have been lost from their personalities, and they are unaware of their loss.

"There is a dying world, Elaine, but unified work and intelligently directed effort will save it. The great scientists know how, and they cannot induce the people to follow their lead. There is no concern for the slow death of a once fair world, for what is death but a mere state of transition? There is no will to struggle, no incentive, no ambition to progress still further.

"The men of that world have reached a condition of mental apathy, an appalling indifference to the course of destiny. What is this priceless, vital spark that is lacking? They have lost their sense of humor. On Koorulu, no man has even smiled for more than five thousand years. They have forgotten how."

For the moment Elaine permitted herself to be swept along on this stream of pensive fancy. She permitted herself this poignant peek at the fabulous city of Kanada. Again the fair Elaine—Elaine, the Lily maid of Astolat—was adrift in her barge upon the waters of poetic prose.

"How terrible!" she whispered. "Have they no hearts, these men of Koorulu? Are there no women there? No children? No things of joy and beauty? No—no music! Listen to that! 'Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life.' With music like that, how can man fail to conquer his environment?"

Lambdin studied her rapt face in secret amazement. Was this the double-talk Logic Shayne had meant?

"Yes," he murmured, sighing faintly. "They have all of those things, even music. But the vital fire is missing. Their music has rhythm, of course—rhythm set to mathematics. It has no soul. What was that music being played when we met in the cocktail lounge?"

"Standard," answered Elaine dreamily.

"How symbolic!" he said, repeating the title. "How beautiful! I wonder, Louis, if it might be played again."

Shayne welcomed his excuse from the production figures and expense paragonics of Maurice Rynder. Rynder may have had an interesting viewpoint of his own, but the sports reporter couldn't find it.

"Yes," he said, looking at his watch. It was time to report to his boss. "I'll see to it. Excuse me for a few minutes."

HE passed on the request for a repetition of "Standard" and found a telephone booth. It didn't take him long to report the day's summary to the publisher.

"And that's all you can give me on the sixth day?" said Hartman in heavy sarcasm. "I thought you were an ace reporter!"

"I never qualified as an attendant in a bughouse," Shayne rejoined hotly. "I can't make this guy out. I'm beginning to believe we didn't even see that ship of his. We're the ones who are crazy."

"Quite so," was the acid response. "In the face of what you just told me about that two-way radio belt of his—that he even sleeps with it strapped around him so he can stay in touch with his crew. You are with him constantly, and you can't even catch him in communication with his assistants. Six days at an expense of better than a hundred dollars a day, not counting your salary and bones—and all you get is an invitation to Mars!"

"I can't help it!" snapped Shayne. "Why pick on me? I've kept everybody else away from him, haven't I?"

And you didn't do so hot that first night with your three trained seals of science. I didn't claim to be a scientific man, but Liankin is making me believe I'm a hellava lot better informed than I thought I was. I'm taking him to that Broadway hit, 'Hades, With Popcorn,' tomorrow night. So I won't be able to report until after midnight. He's still diligently searching for humor, and he's getting restless about that scientific meeting, too."

There was no answer to this, and Shayne jiggled the telephone hook.

"Mr. Hartman? Are you still there?"

"Yes," came back the deep, measured tones of the publisher. "I was just thinking. Keep up your work. You never can tell when something will break. That's all. Good night."

Shayne returned to the dining room just in time to hear the closing strains of the request number. To his stark shock, he saw Elaine and Liankin gliding together across the dance floor.

In the manner of a small boy carefully holding a kitten, Liankin's arm gently unfolded the girl. Their eyes were locked, as though a magnetic bond had drawn them together.

"More gravity," the reporter muttered sourly. "The Kid from Mars had better turn off his pipe organ control."

"What did you say?" asked Maurice Ryder, turning his head to Shayne resumed his seat. "Don't they make a handsome couple together? I didn't know Mr. Liankin could dance."

"Don't bother your head about him," advised Shayne. "You're better than I am at finance, so you take the check."

Later, as they were retiring, Liankin spoke sadly to the reporter.

"I still cannot see humor in the things you tell me are funny, Louis. I just don't understand it. They can't be very comical, for even you do not laugh. Come to think of it, you seldom laugh, Louis. Is humor an elusive will-o'-the-wisp for you, too?"

"Lately, it's been too much of an effort," admitted Shayne.

"Elaine!" breathed Liankin as he retrieved his trousers.

He stood holding them in his hand, a ludicrous athletic figure in his shirt

tail, shorts, patterned socks and shoes. Shayne had to concede that the Kid from Mars looked better in his Martian outfit than in partial modern dress.

"Elaine!" repeated Liankin. "You know, Louis, the only part of the day that seemed worthwhile to me was the time I spent with Elaine Elliot. I've never danced before in my life, but I believe I could dance on with her forever."

"You should have visited America during the marathon craze," said Shayne. "At that, you're showing sense if not humor."

CHAPTER XIII

The Search

SHAYNE began to have qualms of uneasiness when Liankin started looking at him in the middle of the first act of "Hades, with Popcorn." The academic altercation began between them during the first intermission. With allowances for the various logical interruptions, it kept on until they stepped into the taxicab after their visit to the Harlem night club.

"This—this spectacle," said Liankin gravely. "Is it really supposed to be funny?"

"You see everybody around you rearing with laughter, don't you?" pointed out Shayne. "It is funny. Even I will admit it. That comedian could make a corpse laugh at his own funeral. He combines minute observation and a touch of pathos with sophistry. In short, he's a plain slipstick artist."

"But I am not laughing," mourned Liankin. "What you point out as comical seems either perfectly logical or patently silly to me. For instance, why don't the actors confine their incomprehensible antics to the stage? Their constant running out into the audience made for greater confusion. And forcing a spectator to accept a block of ice—when he insisted that his house was equipped with electric refrigeration—struck me as being most annoying."

"It was annoying to that man. That's what made it funny to everybody else. It was a joke. Even the victim understood that. And it was harmless. No sensible person likes harmful practical jokes."

"I grant you that it was harmless enough. But what was funny about it?"

"The absurdity of it," asserted Shayne. "If it had been logical, it wouldn't have been funny. The very refusal of the actors to recognize a barrier between stage and audience makes the business shockingly funny. That might be termed the incongruity of fixed ideas. Just like an actor in a com-



ture play of, say, ancient Rome, walking out onto the stage, wearing shoes of the twentieth century. That would bring down the house because it would be an anachronism.

"I once saw a performance of 'Hamlet' in which the shoes worn by the ghost squeaked loudly when he walked. Ghostly apparitions don't wear shoes. This was concrete evidence that he did, and was therefore material. The actors went on pretending to believe he was a disembodied spirit. The audience fell into the slides."

"I don't see it," said Liankin. "He wasn't really a spirit. Why shouldn't the embarrassing squeak have been

overlooked? As for the anachronism you suggest, that could never happen upon a Martian stage—if the theater were still extant on Mars."

"I can well believe it," said Shayne shortly. The reporter with increasing frequency found himself accepting the Martian premise unconsciously. He often surprised himself by arguing against it as if it were an actual fact. "Would you have thought it funny if the guy who got the ice suddenly pulled out glasses, liquor and a bottle of whisky and proceeded to mix drinks?"

"No. Would you?"

"Certainly. Say, it isn't bad. Maybe I can do something with it. You see, that would've turned the gag on the comedian, who would've laughed louder than anybody else."

"I would have thought that the sensible thing to do," said Liankin. "It would have utilized the melting ice."

SHAYNE waved his hands wildly in defeat.

"You're impossible!"

"But I'm not. I am only trying to see what is funny. You say a thing is comical. But when we analyze it, it proves to be simply stupid. Let us consider that line which caused a gale of laughter in the second act. It struck me as being irrelevant. 'Confucius say, man who kides girl on hillside not on level.' Explain that to me."

"That's a play on words or phrases which have a double meaning. 'Not on the level' is a slang term which means that such a person is dishonest. It also means that a hillside, being an inclined plane out of the horizontal, is not on the level."

"Your second explanation is obvious, and I will concede the first. But what is pleasant or comical about a man having dishonorable intentions toward a woman?"

"Damn it, that isn't the funny part!" howled Shayne. "Only the ludicrous combination is funny. Tear anything to pieces the way you do, and it's as flat as a day-old pancake."

"I think so, too," solemnly agreed Liankin. "And why the vague reference to Confucius? He was a profoundly humanitarian Chinese phil-

osopher of about twenty-five hundred years ago. And why the clipped style of speech?"

"Association of ideas," explained Shayne patiently. "Confucius made pertinent observations. These new whicracks are pseudo-sage reflections. So they are attributed to him. The clipped wording comes from what is termed pidgin English—a style of speech employed by a few Chinese and all movie writers."

"Then, it seems that the entire conclusion is shakily built on a number of uncorrelated premises," observed Liankin. "Why, therefore, is it funny?"

"To people like you it isn't. It depends on the knowledge of the listener. The average human being has a sufficient fund of miscellaneous information to enable him to correlate all or most of the points covered in a joke. The speed of it is generally the important thing. If he has to stop laboriously, figure it out, the joke falls flat. Sometimes the audience figures it out instantly, and it still falls flat. That is what is known professionally as laying an egg."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Liankin. "The humor of any given situation does not depend on the antics or words of the performer, but upon the receptivity of his audience?"

"My God, you've got it!" cried Shayne in mock triumph. "Nothing is particularly funny about a comedian—in himself. Nothing is funny about a good story with a twist or a ludicrous situation or anything like that—in itself. It always depends on the point of view of the listener or the reader. Everybody doesn't laugh at everything that passes for humor. But everybody laughs at something. It is a universal trait. Without it, man would be lost, drowned in his own melancholy."

"That is what I have been trying to make you see," said Liankin. "The men of Mars are drowning in their own melancholy. But we are not gloomy people. We simply don't see the funny side of things. The point of view . . . perhaps if I could apply that principle to the familiar things of Mars, I could comprehend what you mean. On Earth, it is pointless to me. I must give it some thought."

SHAYNE expelled his breath with relief.

"I'm glad that argument is settled. I'm damned if I see anything funny about it, myself. If you've had enough of this night club, suppose we try something else. I've done my best for you. It's up to you to find something to start laughing about. It's your funeral."

"I fail to see anything to promote mirth about a funeral. But I am grateful for what you have done, Louie. Perhaps, with the other part of my mission accomplished, you have helped Mars more than we knew."

"Back on the merry-go-round," observed Shayne as he paid the check. "Let's go, Floratic."

"Why do you call me that?"

"There seem to be more things in heaven and hell than were dreamt of in your philosophy."

"I never doubted it," said Liankin.

Shayne handed their bar checks to the beauty of the cloakroom.

"Perhaps I should have called you Yorick."

"Ah!" nodded Liankin, his face brightening. "I comprehend your allusion. 'Hamlet' again—Shakespeare?"

"Screens!" said Shayne. "And shake a leg."

The braided doorman under the canopy hailed a taxi for them. The reporter ushered Liankin inside the cab. He followed closely on his heels—to find the cab uncomfortably crowded.

A gun was jammed into his ribs hard enough to make him grunt. The cab door slammed. They streaked from the curb.

"A stick-up?" yelled Shayne.

"Stow it, lug!" snarled a harsh voice.

"Take it easy and you won't get hurt. Let out a single yowl, and I'll hang your brains down your throat. How's his ribs doing, Marlowe?"

"Quiet as a lamb."

Shayne went rigid all over at the mention of that name. He placed "Click" Diller and "Goopy" Marlowe, as vicious a pair of crooks as still scoured the jungles of Manhattan.

Diller, tall, thin, and wary as a steel cable had been a torpedo in the old beer barrel days. How he had escaped the general holocaust and withstood

the present legal and economic pressure, nobody knew. Shayne realized he would head for anybody who flashed enough of the stuff in taken.

Marlowe, big, hearty, bubbling over with false good humor, was an artist in in soap. He used soap to seal the cracks of sales he intended blowing, for making most impressions of keys and other things. And he soft-soaped prospective victims.

"Don't start anything, Kid," Shayne warned quickly. "Everything will be all right."

"Of course," answered Liankin's calm voice. "But why is it necessary for all of us to sit on one seat?"

"Funny chap, aren't you?" chuckled Marlowe.

"Wise guy?" snapped Diller. "Don't take any chances with him."

"I never take chances," was Marlowe's pleasantly grim response.

"All right, Diller," said Shayne soothingly. "You've got us. I didn't know you went in for small-time heling, but you never can tell in this changing world. My wallet is in my inside breast pocket. The Kid hasn't any dough on him."

"Shut up!" snapped Diller. "So you know me, smart guy? Well, this ain't a heist. It's a snatch. And whether you come out of it safely depends on how you behave."

LOUIS SHAYNE subsided in his crowded corner. He thought harder and faster than he had ever thought in his life. The gloom of the cab was easily lifted only by the occasional pallid glow of the street lights which the taxi passed. The reporter's bitter conclusion was that he had failed Hartman a second time, and had finally got Liankin into a bad jam.

For there was no doubt in the sports reporter's mind that they had been kidnaped at the instigation of some European or Asiatic espionage agent. Such a spectacular demonstration as Liankin had staged at Meadowbrook couldn't have gone unheeded by other interests than the Hartman combine.

So now Liankin's son and heir was over. If he persisted in his Martian act, he was due for a violent awakening.

He stood to have his invention wrested from him for nothing, his throat cut, and his body dropped in the bay wearing a suit of concrete. The best he could hope for was confinement in a concentration camp until he revealed all the details of his stratosphere ship. And just where did that leave the man who had been the inventor's intimate for a week or more? Shayne groaned.

"Ballpache?" asked Diller.

"Well, it's something I can't digest," admitted Shayne ruefully.

"A gastric disturbance," observed Liankin sagely. "Do you know, a study of the etymology of words in the English language would be of absorbing interest. I only wish—"

"Nota!" cut in Diller savagely. "Button your lip, or I'll give you both some hot lead you couldn't begin to digest."

"I don't like the tone of your voice, Mr. Diller," said Liankin, his own voice taking a metallic edge. "And there is the implication of a threat in your words. B—O—O!" He broke off with a gasp as his own captor jabbed him deeper with a gun.

"Take it easy, Kid!" pleaded Shayne. "We're in a jam."

"Oh, of course—I forgot," agreed Liankin mildly, relaxing. "But I consider this is rather poor taste, Louis."

This brought another chuckle out of Scapy Marlowe.

"Isn't it, just? And it isn't polite to point, but pardon the snoot of my gun."

The taxi driver twisted his head and spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"Almost there, Diller."

"Okay," said the leader of the trio. "Now listen, you two guys. Where we're taking you ain't none of your business. So are you gonna be good boys while we blindfold you, or do you want to be copped?"

"Snapped?" questioned Liankin.

"Knocked on the head," translated Shayne swiftly. "We'll take the blindfold."

"Just as you say," was Liankin's docile agreement.

All the reporter knew was that the cab was approaching the lower East Side and working over toward the river. More than this he could not ascertain before Diller produced a piece of heavy,

dark material from his pocket. Shayne was wondering how the crook expected to keep him under a gun and blindfold him at the same time.

"Take it and put it on," his captor ordered. "It's a black hood, but you won't suffocate. And no funny moves."

"The name goes for you, pal," Marlowe said to Liamkin. "Put on your thinking cap. It won't come down below your chin."

IN reluctant silence, Shayne complied. From the sounds in the opposite corner he knew that Liamkin was obligingly doing the same. There was silence for a few minutes.

Then the cab rumbled over rough cobblestones, turned left down a sharp incline, and halted with a rattling squealing of brakes. The rear door on Liamkin's side opened. They saw light being flashed into the car, below their knee hoods.

"Get out first, Marlowe," directed Diller. "Carroll, open the door."

The jangle of keys preceded the clicking of a lock. The small and raw feel of water told Shayne they must be close to the East River. But he could hear none of the usual river sounds. Without being able to see, he understood that in a few moments.

In single file a gun in each of their backs, the two prisoners were ordered to march ahead. They crossed the threshold of the building. The door was closed and locked behind them. The never-to-be-forgotten smell of a warehouse swept under his head and reached the reporter's nostrils. He counted mentally when they were

marched nearly a hundred steps along. They halted while one of their captors knocked at a wooden door.

"Enter," bade a gruff and obviously disguised voice.

There was plenty of light about there as the two prisoners were conducted forward and halted.

"Very well," spoke the gruff voice again. "Unbind them."

The gun pressure at their backs relaxed. Unseen hands snatched the obscuring hoods from their heads. They blinked uncertainly in the bright light.

Shayne knew they were at the rear office of a huge warehouse of some sort, perhaps even out over the water. Gradually he became used to the light. He observed that it shone full upon them from a cone reflector just above their heads, throwing the rest of the room in semi-shadow. The three kidnapers arranged themselves behind the captives automatic pistols in hand. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

Unwilling Victims

BUT it was the fantastic scene before them that diverted Shayne's attention. Behind a long wooden table, well back from the cone of brilliant light, sat two men. Their hands, white and rather ghastly against their somber black garb, were in view on the table. Their heads and torsos were masked by one-piece hoods and capes, only three were eye holes in the hoods and a white swastika was painted on the

[Turn page]

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breast of each cape.

"Off with the old hood, on with the new," observed Shayne sardonically. "What is this—a game?"

There was no immediate response to this. Two pairs of eyes stared coldly at the prisoners through the holes in the matching hoods, glimmering in the light that reached them. There was no sound but the heavy breathing of a creak behind them, and the faint *lap-lap* of river water against piling.

Llanckin, whose uncertain reaction to this business Shayne was anxious to know, appeared quite at ease. He stood beside the reporter. Perfectly balanced on his feet, shoulders thrown back, bluish-red hair happily tousled, he looked as utterly self-possessed as though he had just stepped out of a Fifth Avenue men's shop. His hat, of course, had been left behind in the taxi-cab.

Then the heavier of the two seated hoods spoke for the first time. His voice was guttural and cold as the North Sea.

"It is the game of war, gentlemen," he said in precise English, with just a trace of Germanic accent. "We regret the necessity of bringing you here in such a manner, but it was unavoidable. We are men of few words and I will state our proposition briefly. Kindly pay close attention.

"You, Herr Lanchon, are the inventor of a new design of airship. It is our purpose to examine this craft immediately. If it is so good as the report of our agents leads us to believe, you will be offered a fair price for the plans and this model of your invention. If it is not, you will be released without harm. It will be necessary for you to accompany the persuasive gentlemen behind you by boat.

"An isolated spot has been selected out on Long Island. You are to radio your ship to meet us there so our experts can examine it. It is up to you whether you will agree to this willingly or whether we shall be compelled to use force. It is optional whether or not you wish to take your companion, Herr Shayne, along with you."

The voice ceased, and there was expectant silence. If he had thought

Llanckin was going to protest or agree, he was disappointed. Llanckin remained mute.

"It sounds like a secret lodge initiation, Karl," said Shayne. "But the identity of those tough eggs behind us tells me it's the real McCoy."

Llanckin remained silent. He merely shifted his troubled blue eyes from the hooded figures to the safty sports reporter. The slenderness of the hooded men cleared his throat.

"Come, come," he said in his harsh, disguised voice. "What is your answer? Be quick!"

IT was Shayne again who broke the silence.

"What is the alternative if Llanckin refuses to be intimidated?"

"A few hours in the hands of Diller and Marlowe will make him beg to talk. I would regret to be forced to use such harsh methods as they are capable of devising. Hurry, Herr Lanchon, and give me your answer. Time is flying.

"Will you demonstrate your ship willingly, or do we use unpleasant methods?"

Llanckin fixed his eyes accusingly on Shayne.

"Don't you think this has gone far enough? I still do not have the right point of view. It isn't funny."

"Funny?" gasped Shayne. "You're damned right it isn't funny! We're up against a murderous spy crowd who won't be interested in your Martian fairy tale." He edged closer and lowered his voice glacially. "Better kid 'em along for the present. Maybe we can turn the tables—"

"Kindly let Herr Lanchon answer for himself!" rapped out the hood with the guttural voice.

Llanckin's eyes seemed to cloud over with disappointment, as though Shayne had misled him one somehow—or played him false. He turned and faced the hooded pair.

"No," he said flatly. "I will show you nothing before I address a conference of Earth scientists."

The heavier of the two men shook violently with fury. The other raised his hand in a signal to the three waiting crooks behind the prisoners. Shayne

noticed the gleam of an opal ring upon his middle finger.

"Search him!" ordered Gathard Voice. "He wears his radio communication belt constantly on his person. Strip it from him. Perhaps that will loosen his tongue."

Before either of the two prisoners could move, Diller and Marlowe leaped upon Liamkin. Savagely they twisted his arms behind him.

Shayne tensed his own muscles in involuntary protest. He heard Liamkin's tendons crack and his breath hiss between his lips at the sudden pain. The thug named Casell shoved his gun viciously into the reporter's left kidney.

"Don't move!" he snarled. "I'll spill your nasty red blood all over that nice blue dinner jacket."

His face drawing, Liamkin came up on his toes and then settled slowly back on his heels in the grip of the two terrors. Swiftly Diller shifted his hold. Marlowe gripped both of Liamkin's wrists in one powerful hand of an hand and held Liamkin in a stranglehold with his other arm. Diller moved in front to rip open the captive's jacket and shirt.

In spite of this painful position, Liamkin spoke distinctly.

"Look," he said in a deadly voice. "I never thought you, of all men, were of the mental caliber to stoop to such trickery. Why do you seek to do this to me?"

THAT strange words, the very bitter-ness of his voice, momentarily halted the hands of Chuck Diller. The crook stared at Liamkin's face through narrowed and puzzled eyes.

"If" exclaimed Shayne in stark bewilderment. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"I thought it was simply one of those incongruous situations you had arranged for me. Now it looks like treachery of some sort."

"Are you crazy, Kid?" panted Shayne. "These hoodlums are going to kill us both, if you don't give up, or I can't talk or buy our way out of this hole."

"You mean you have nothing to do with this?" demanded Liamkin.

"Of course not!" growled the reporter. "This gorilla's got a gun buried so deep in my back right now, it feels like it's sprouting."

"Ah!" breathed Liamkin as Chick Diller growled in his throat and ruthlessly ripped open his shirt with fingers of steel. "Why didn't you say in the first place that these men were not your friends?"

And a miracle came to pass. Before Diller could more than hook his fingers in Liamkin's silk undershirt, the Kid from Mars expended his huge chest. His strained arm muscles went as rigid as iron bars. Even the powerful Marlowe could not move them in any direction.

Suddenly he stooped, dragging the astounded Marlowe irresistibly over with him. The crook's grip slipped helplessly on those steel wrists. He released his hold and hunched out wildly to keep from falling.

Instantly Liamkin's arms whipped around, locked behind his head in a terrible hug about Marlowe's neck. He rose to his feet with a sinuous shudder that was almost reptilian, and heaved.

The bulky Marlowe went catapulting over his head in an involuntary somersault. He crashed squarely down upon Diller's head. The pair of criminals collapsed, senseless, to the floor.

"Well, I'll be a—!" mouthed Casell in startled terror.

He jerked his gun around in a short arc to blast Liamkin down.

That was all Shayne needed. He pivoted on his heel, brought his fist up in a reckless hook. But it caught the chauffeur under the jaw with enough force to lift him to his toes. The gun roared once as Casell dropped it. The bullet went wild.

Before the chauffeur could even start falling, Liamkin reached out and plucked him bodily off his feet. He hurled him like a javelin at the two hooded figures, who were leaping erect in fright.

The three of them went down behind the table in a tangled snarl of confusion. Shayne snatched Casell's dropped automatic. He grabbed Liamkin's arm just in time to prevent the raging Kid from diving headlong across the table. It

was like grabbing a bar of iron, and he was nearly jerked off his feet.

"Mix, kid, mix!" he scolded out. "Lay off! It's time to go. Let's get out of here before more rats come out of their holes."

The wild glare of battle faded from Liamkin's eyes. He was a magnificent figure in the ruins of his dress shirt and dinner jacket. But he was sane.

"All right," he agreed coolly.

Without another glance at the havoc he had wrought, he turned and opened the door. He led the way unerringly along the path they had trod blindfolded.

WITH the sense of a homing pigeon, he found his way through the dark straight to the door which had admitted them. Here Liamkin was temporarily stopped by the barrier. Angry yells pursued them.

"It's barred," panted Shayne, thrusting the gun into Liamkin's hand. "Hold 'em off. Shoot to kill. I'll get the door open."

"But I can't do that," protested Liamkin. "Murder is not my purpose on Earth."

"Damn you and your purpose!" growled Shayne, faking fanatically for the bar in the darkness. "Those knuts are playing for keeps."

They certainly were. A whistle shrieked at the rear of the great warehouse. A string of naked light bulbs came to life overhead, making the vast structure a haunted place of dim light and gloomy shadows. Like a pack of rats, the reserve minions of the two hooded men swarmed down on the fugitives.

"Do not kill them!" came the shouted order from the rear. The heavy-set man, still hooded, came running forward. "Take them alive!"

He whipped off his hood impatiently, the better to see. Shayne, had whirled about and placed his back to the door. He let out a whistle of amazement. He recognized the spy leader as George Crown head of the Monmouth Mercantile Importing Company. Crown's careless unavailing meant a graver and more significant thing. The reporter and Liamkin were not intended to live

any great length of time, captured alive at this moment or not.

But there was no time for speculation. The dozen ruffians were upon them. Ostensibly warehouse employees of this going concern, they were plainly agents of the espionage ring that had its particular head in George Crown. The reporter knew the country was rife with spies. But he had given the problem little concern, content to leave such things to the F.B.I. It had become a personal matter at a decidedly awkward moment.

Shayne had not seen Liamkin at work in the Canary Club. Neither had the thugs. Contemporaneously thrusting into his pocket the automatic Shayne had handed him, Liamkin leaped to meet the charge.

As the foremost spy aimed a blow at him, Liamkin side-stopped and deftly caught the fellow's wrist. He jerked the extended arm across his shoulder as he turned his back. He gave a slight heave. The screaming victim hurtled over his head to crash into the barred door and drop, bleeding and senseless, to the concrete floor.

Shayne luckily staggered back the second attacker.

"For God's sake!" he panted. "If you're not going to use it, give me that gun, kid."

"No," said Liamkin, springing out for the man Shayne had hit. "We must not kill. It isn't necessary."

CHAPTER XV

Business as Usual

INSTANTLY his slowey form was engulfed in a tide of snarling men and legs and arms. How he kept his feet seemed a miracle to the frantic reporter.

Shayne found himself being rapidly beaten down by two of the vicious gang. He fought valiantly, but physical exertion had been a private don't of his for too long a time. Crown slipped him across the head with a gun barrel, while the two bruisers held him. That was the final subjugation of

Shayne. Knocked to his knees, the reporter stared up from between his two curly capers through a haze of pain.

Liamkin had taken his fight toward a pyramid of packing cases, leaving a trail of unconscious men in his wake. From the rear, Carroll spitting blood and the tall, hooded man limping painfully, came the remaining pair from the office. Of Officer and Marlowe there was no sign.

Carroll had another gun in his fist.

"Lemme see blast him, Mr. Crown," he pleaded with a snarl. "Break two of my teeth, will he?"

"No!" roared Crown. "You black-head! You would kill before we have what we want. We need this man to control the other. Get over there and help subdue that madman. You two, tie this fellow up good."

The hairy pair willingly obeyed by hurling the reporter to his face on the hard, grimy floor. One knelt on him while the second lashed his hands firmly behind him. Then they tied his ankles, dragged him to one side. Leaving him against a barlap hole of something, they ran to take part in the other fray.

"Himself!" said Crown in awe. "That inventor fights like a tiger."

"I told you," said the man still headed. "He wrecked the Canary Club single-handed. You had better let these men wing him a couple of times."

"Nois! Are you mad, too? Use clubs, men! Beat him into submission!"

"Won't this noise be heard?" asked the hooded man anxiously.

"Not by anyone who matters," Crown answered. "Only my own men are on duty tonight as watchmen."

Shayne heard no more, for the pair moved away to follow the progress of the running fight. And running fight it was, Liamkin's adversaries were cut down to six men, in spite of the addition of Carroll and the pair who had captured Shayne. Liamkin had shaken free from the mesh and was heading them all over the huge packed warehouse.

It looked as though they had him cornered once. He had leaped into the air and caught hold of the dangling

chains of an overhead crane. He went up the chains, hand over hand, like a sailor. Reaching the top, he slipped himself up on the girder and ran like a monkey along the skeletal braces high overhead.

Carroll lost his head at this. He began firing at the fleeing figure that was disappearing in the darkness above the widely spaced electric bulbs. The following *Ad* shook the echoes in the building.

"Fool!" howled Crown, rushing forward and knocking aside the chauffeur's hand. "If that man dies, so do you!"

"He'll get away!" roared Carroll.

"He cannot get out. The warehouse is locked and barred at every exit. Climb up there after him. Get him down!"

"He's got my other gun," protested Carroll. "Or did you find it on the other bird?"

"They must have dropped it," said Crown. "He hasn't used it."

"He doesn't appear to need a gun," commented the tall hood nervously. "I told you what he did to the Canary—"

"So you did!" snapped Crown. "You go now and guard the trap to the heat. As soon as we catch him, you must get away. I will call you if I need you later."

"All right," agreed the tall man.

He turned and limped hurriedly back toward the office where lay the two unconscious crooks.

THE entire group drifted toward the back end of the warehouse, leaving Shayne alone and helpless in his bonds. Straining his eyes, he saw two of the gang laboriously climbing to the girders above and grimly preparing to snare the elusive Liamkin.

Twisting around to see what offered in his immediate neighborhood, the reporter noted that the hole he rested against was one of a pyramid. It rose to within perhaps three feet of the spiderlike girders above.

A wild cry from the depths of the warehouse made him start. Each moment he was afraid they had captured Liamkin. Then came another scream, which ended in a gurgle. Liamkin had

caught another rat with his feet.

"Hell, Mr. Crown!" bellowed Carol's voice from the gloom. "You better give me a rifle and let me put this guy. Only three of your shock troops are left. He's scattered all the rest from bell to breakfast."

George Crown uttered a roar of rage and plunged toward the sound of Carol's voice. The next moment Shayne caught sight of a flitting shadow darting out of the gloom of the opposite front corner. It was Llamkin.

Without a pause, the Kid from Mars ran straight to the side of the tightly bound sports reporter. He scooped him up as though he were an infant.

"Are you hurt, Louis?" he whispered.

"Not beyond repair," granted Shayne. "But we're slated to die—both of us. Get out of here while you're still in one piece. Leave me here and run. I'll manage somehow."

There was a howl of triumph from the corner Llamkin had just quitted. A pair of the human tigers came leaping out of the darkness. Llamkin didn't take time to argue. He started climbing these bales of goodness though they were stairs. The reporter was still held tightly under one arm.

He paused at the top only long enough to throw Shayne across one shoulder. Then he was on the girders again and running with sure, swift feet.

Shayne took one look at the concrete floor far below. He snapped his eyes shut and swallowed hard.

"Sorry to carry you this way," apologized Llamkin. "But there is no time. I have found a possible way out through what must be a ventilator in the roof. Why are these men so intent on capturing us?"

"They are—foreign spies," Shayne heaved in jolting spasms. "They want your stratosphere ship—for their own country—"

"How odd. I intend giving the plans of that and a hundred other things to your entire world. Why should they be so impatient?"

"War," granted the reporter. "As if you didn't know— They don't intend for the rest—of the world to have it— just like Colonel Thompson and John Hartman—intend to see that the—

United States get it—"

"But it isn't an instrument of war," Llamkin declared. "It is a gravity space ship, designed only for spatial voyages."

"Llamkin, you pick a hell—of a time to kid— If you know of a way out of this place—find it quick— That gang will burn—your feet off to make you—surrender that ship—if they get their hands on you—"

"You mean they are enemies of your government?" demanded Llamkin, looking abruptly at a cross-beam.

"What the hell did you think they were doing—playing ping-pong?"

SHAYNE could feel the kid from Mars tremble slightly beneath him. He held his breath while he feared they would both plunge to their death below.

"Wait here," said Llamkin briefly, folding Shayne across the bracing girder. "You'll be safe until I come back."

"Good Lord, don't leave me like this!" yelped the reporter in dismay. "At least untie my hands. There's a penknife in my pocket."

Llamkin did not trouble to hurt the knife. He merely inserted his slender fingers beneath a strand and snapped it like thread. Unwinding the rope, he clapped an encouraging hand on the reporter's shoulder. Then he went off along the beam with the sure-footedness of a structural steel worker. Shayne could only cling there and tremble.

But from his aerial vantage point, the reporter saw a strange thing happen abruptly. Llamkin met the two pursuers close to the pile of bales. They saw him coming, and both of them leaped to grab him. Llamkin brushed off the gripping hands of the first, who plummeted, screaming in terror, down to his death on the floor.

The second connected. Locked in mortal combat, the two of them toppled forward and fell from the girder.

Shayne caught his breath in a sobbing gasp. The pair of them hit the fourth of fifth step of the pile of bales and rolled safely to the bottom. But only Llamkin arose from the floor. The spy was out cold.

There was a howl of rage, and

Crown came racing out of the shadows, a Gossard rifle in his hands. Carroll ran at his heels.

It looked like curtains for the Kid from Mars. Shayne groaned weakly. He gauged his chances of dropping from his perch and landing on the overwhelmingly armed man.

It wasn't necessary to attempt such a foolhardy stunt. For the first time, Llanckin reached swiftly toward his belt. His hand came up with a small black object just as Crown raised his frightful rifle.

"Surrender," ordered the spy leader in an awful voice. "I will kill—"

He never got farther. A fine jet of whitish mist lanced out from the weapon in Llanckin's hand. It billowed over both Crown and Carroll before they could move.

The result was instantaneous, like magic. Both men went as rigid as statues where they stood. Then they toppled full-length, as a log falls, and lay perfectly motionless. It was like knocking over powder soldiers, for they remained in the same stiff attitude they had been standing in. It was ghastly.

A shout of alarm roared from the direction of the office. Llanckin sprang over his vanquished foes and headed for the sound. There was reason for alarm.

A rising wall of sirens came from the direction of the street. Shayne heard the squealing of brakes and the poured of racing feet along the outside of the great building. Axes began thudding against the front doors. The front doors began splintering.

The police had arrived. Obviously somebody had heard Carroll's earlier shooting and had called the law.

L LANCKIN'S stride did not falter. He charged into the office in time to see the bulky Marlowe disappearing through a trap-door in the floor. He aimed his queer gun.

A darting streak of white—and a statue of living stone plunged down. It crashed upon the deck of a speedboat just below.

There was a startled curse, a yell of terror in Diller's voice, the sudden roar

of an awakened motor. Then Llanckin was hurtling down the steep steps, to the hidden landing beneath the office, at the inner end of the U-shaped pier.

Once more his gas gun blazed softly. The last two members of the espionage crew toppled lifelessly before him. Llanckin calmly stepped aboard the craft and cut the switch.

Ignoring the bodies of the two American crooks, he gathered up the stiff figure of the tall, bearded man. He sprang back up the steps in time to come face to face with Sergeant Reilly.

"Jumping pliers!" yelled the sergeant. "You again!"

CHAPTER XVI

The Cockeyed Trick

L LANCKIN nodded gravely and set his burden on his feet. Studying it with one hand, he pulled off the cape and obscuring hood with the other. The grandiose features of Dr. Percival Folsome were exposed under the cone of light. The eyes glimmered sightlessly.

"Mother of God!" murmured Reilly, creasing himself. But he lowered his gun. "What kind of a spell did you be main' to kill him? I found two more stiff-like that out in the warehouse among the litter of the dead and the dying."

"I am sorry, Sergeant. If anybody died. There are two more like this down in the speedboat. Chick Diller and a man called Marlowe. Louis Shayne identified them by these names."

"Hell, Sergeant," exclaimed one of the bluecoats behind Reilly. "This stiff is that high society eye doctor—Folsome!"

"How did you kill him?" demanded the sergeant again.

"He isn't dead," said Llanckin. "I merely anesthetized him with this."

"What is it—a gas gun?" Reilly surveyed the small black weapon with goggling eyes.

"Yes."

"Well, would you mind handin' it over, laddie boy? I'm afraid you're un-

der arrest again—if you don't mind."

"I do mind," said Liamkin to both question and statement. He returned the queer little gun to his belt.

The sergeant scratched his chin in perplexity. Then he waved a couple of his men toward the trap-door.

"Go down and bring up them other spalpeens. Who did you say, Liamkin? Diller and Marlowe? Boy, do we want them two birds bad! What the hell happened here? Do you tear up every joint you go into?"

"Help!" piped a voice from overhead, in the gloom of the warehouse.

Sergeant Reilly started, his gun leaping up.

"Louis Shayne," explained Liamkin quickly. "I fear I forgot him for a moment. I had to leave him up there."

"Had to leave him up there?" repeated Reilly dazedly.

"Yes. His feet are tied. I'll bring him down."

Before the bewildered sergeant could say him nay, Liamkin thrust the stiff figure of Dr. Folkestone at him. The kid from Mars sprinted out into the warehouse, where numerous officers were rounding up the victims of this amazing one-man war.

In a matter of moments, Louis Shayne was safely on the floor and giving a recount to the police.

"It's the damndest thing," the reporter concluded. "George Crown is the head of a spy ring that included all of these men, Diller and Marlowe we throw in gratis. They're the pair who kidnaped Liamkin and me. If you need any more proof than what we've told you, and when you can see here, you should be able to sweat it out of some of these hoodlums."

"You can't sweat nothing out of dead men," said the sergeant.

"But there is only one dead man," replied Liamkin gravely. "He fell to his death when he missed his hold on me up on the girder."

"And how about Crown and Folkestone and the three others?" asked Reilly.

"They are not dead," reiterated Liamkin. "They are in a state of unconscious paralysis, which will wear off in a couple of hours."

"What kind of new gas is that?"

"It isn't new on Mars. It has no earthly name. I merely brought it with me solely as a possible protective measure."

"Eh? Oh, Mars," responded the sergeant vaguely, squinting at Liamkin.

"Well, I guess we'd better be going down to headquarters. Come along."

SHAYNE had been examining the two curiously stiff figures. He straightened up and shook his head in wonder.

"We'll go with you Sarge," he said. "But I'm advising you to get in touch with Colonel Thomlinson before you do any talking. And it's true—these men are not dead. Carroll's already going limp. He'll be right out of it."

It was only two o'clock when Shayne and Liamkin returned to their hotel. It seemed like a century to the sports reporter. He stopped by the bar for a couple of stiff drinks and a quart bottle to take up to their suite. One highball after they got to their quarters was all he could get Liamkin to swallow. Then, while Shayne set himself to the serious business of drinking himself out of the reaction shakes, Liamkin drew Carroll's automatic from his pocket. He began examining the weapon with great absorption.

"A rather primitive sort of firearm," he finally commented.

"The hell you say!" snarled Shayne, refilling his glass with straight whisky. "You wouldn't be sitting here coolly criticizing it if you'd stopped that slug Carroll fired out of it."

"Equally true of the primeval arrow," replied Liamkin with equal civility. "Nevertheless it is fit from having the efficacy of the atomic-blast ray gun we use on Mars for hunting the Krulogru monster."

"Nuts!" said Shayne weakly. "That gas gun of yours is tall enough. But how the hell did you get out of that hammerlock grip Marlowe had on you? Ju-jutsu?"

"Ju-jutsu? Oh—the Japanese science, isn't it? Yes, you might call it the Martian equivalent of that. I simply applied one of the fundamental principles of Zartosti. That is the sym-

ten of complete mental control of bone and muscle, with the addition of the simple physics of momentum and inertia. Your East Indians and Tibetan llamas come closer to its understanding than your Japs. I'm glad I didn't seriously injure Diller and Marlowe."

"I'm sorry you didn't kill them both. They scared the hell out of me. Say, what made you leave me stuck up there on that girder and go back to get into a fight? And why didn't you think of using your gas gun before? Were you planning to hold that up your sleeve as a special bargain to offer with your snipe?"

"Not at all. The men were endangering you and inconveniencing me. That left me no recourse save to capture them and turn them over to the police for you."

Shayne solemnly poured himself another drink. He downed it in two gulps before speaking. His tongue was getting just a bit thick, but a warm glow was spreading to take the psychic chill from his body.

"Well, you broke up one of the slickest spy rings I guess there was in America, pal. And you saved my life in the bargain. There won't be anything too good for you now. Kill your publicity? What a laugh! Everything that happens just puts you up all the more."

Lambkin considered him thoughtfully.

"But I'm not seeking publicity."

"You don't have to. It seeks you. But tell me, with all the stuff you've got on the ball, why did you submit so tamely to being kidnaped in the first place?"

"I thought Diller and Marlowe were friends of yours."

"What? How did you get such a crazy idea?"

"When we got into that cab, one of them said something about me. It led me to believe that he knew me. 'Quiet as a lamb,' he said. And then you addressed the other by name. So I thought, naturally—"

Never mind, don't ask me to explain. You wouldn't understand. Sure, I recognized Diller by Marlowe's name. I knew these two snakes traveled together. Just some of that simple deduction and correlation of ideas I've been trying to explain to you. Good Lord, what a ghastly joke! You thought I was rigging you for a laugh. Kid, I gave you up as a hopeless when we walked out of that Harlem club. So that's why I had a hell of a time convincing you that that Pittsburgh Klansman stuff was the real thing!"

"Pittsburgh Klansman?" repeated Lambkin uncertainly.

"Yeah, those two black hoods with the Indian signs on them."

"I can't understand the devious reasoning of Earthmen," said Lambkin, frowning. "It wasn't necessary to abstract me to learn about my space ship. I shall give its secrets to the entire world of men when Colonel Thomlinson gathers all your savants together for me to address. How soon now do you think it will be?"

Shayne raised somewhat heavy eyes and goggled at his companion's serious face.

"My God!" he murmured in drunken solemnity. "Do you still believe in that malarkey?"

Lambkin was pacing the rug in long, restless strides. He stopped short and looked sharply at the reporter.

"Certainly," he answered. "Why shouldn't I? What do you mean?"

Shayne began to laugh shamefacedly. He refilled his glass from the rapidly emptying bottle, spilling the liquor carefully as he did so. Then he hiccupped with restraint.

"Lambkin, I've had a sneaking suspicion all along that you were pulling my leg. But I'd be damned if I don't believe you really can't see a joke even when it slaps you right smack in the old puns."

"Joke? You mean that Hartman and Thomlinson are—are jostling with me? Indulging in what you Earthmen call a joke?"

"What else could I mean?"

"They don't intend to call a meeting for me?"

"Oh, sure, but not with scientists to

LOUIS SHAYNE interrupted with a shout of some too sober laughter.

"That was just a coincidence. Kid—another one of those plays on words.

listen to a lecture on Mars. Thorndison's probably had a couple of private talks with the President by now. I guess he's arranging a meeting for you with the military experts at Washington. After what you did tonight, it'll be a clash."

"Military? But I don't want to meet with any war experts of any government of Earth. I came here to appeal to a world-wide congress of scientists."

The sports reporter quit laughing. He even stopped smiling. For a fleeting moment there was an expression of pity in his eyes. When he spoke, in spite of his impeded tongue, his voice was hard and flat.

"Kid, you're priceless. It's a shame to tell you the Easter rabbit doesn't lay colored eggs. But, hell, somebody's got to wake you up! It might as well be me. Hartman never did have any intention of calling a meeting of scientists for a crackpot like you. He's paying me to make you stop clowning and get ready to sell your stratosphere ship."

LAMKIN'S face was a study of incredible pain.

"No?" he said sharply. "Don't tell me that! Surely, none of you would trifle with a matter of such grave importance as an interplanetary mission, a mission to which my whole life has been dedicated, a mission which is for the solemn purpose of saving an entire dying world. I won't—I can't believe it."

"None of us?" jeered Shayne in drunken frankness. "All of us! Why don't you drop this ratty Mars business and get down to brass tacks. You don't have to call a meeting of scientists to make the bidding brisk on your invention. Where would Hartman and Thorndison get a group of scientists from, anyway? You think scientists would travel all the way to New York from England, Russia, Germany—anywhere—just to hear your crazy story? Forget it, Kid. Get wise to yourself."

Llankin, his face, bronzed face curiously white and drawn, came over to the table and sat down across from the reporter. There were actual tears in his eyes, but Shayne was too far gone to notice.

"Listen, Louis," said Llankin in a low, emotion-choked voice. "Do you realize what you are saying, or are you too drunk?"

"Sure, I know what I'm saying," hiccupped the reporter. "And I'm getting good and tired of the whole game."

"Is—in Elaine Elliot's—a party to this—this just?"

"Elaine?" Shayne frowned as he strove to concentrate. "Oh, sure. She had her orders from that blimp, Snyder to unbend her pretty neck and be nice to you—sorta entertain you."

CHAPTER XVII

Welcome to Mars

SLOWLY LLANKIN lowered his head upon his folded arms. There was silence in the room for a long moment. Shayne stared with blurry and unfocused eyes.

"Don't take it so hard, Kid. 'Tall a good joke. Buck up an' laugh. Af' all, you got th' laugh on Hartman and th' colonel—and the spies. Newsie, they didn't get th' ship. Don't give up th' ship, Kid!"

Llankin raised his head.

"The ways of Earthmen are beyond my comprehension," he declared sadly. "All I wanted was an open-minded audience of intelligent people. Mars, my native planet, needs but one thing, which you possess in such abundance on Earth that you waste it. A sense of humor is the catalyst we need to start the reclamation of our dying world. Our greatest scientists have reasoned this after exhaustive research, and they can't be wrong."

"I was going to explain all this and simply ask a few outstanding humorists of Earth to go back with me to Mars, carrying this priceless gift. If they could not explain it—as you have tried to explain to me—our scientists could, by examination, find it in them and analyze it. But now—"

"Huh?" hiccupped Shayne, cocking his head and squinting at Llankin. "Wharret?"

"I just wanted a few Earthmen to accompany me to Mars and submit to mental tests and examinations," repeated Liankin. "It wouldn't take more than a couple of your lunar months. I would have pledged myself to return them to Earth safely. They would have high honors bestowed upon them by the Council of Xecroba, the highest governing body on Mars."

"Oh," mumbled Shayne wisely, nodding. "Just a nice little trip to Mars? Why didn't they that a long time ago? I tell you what to do. No use askin'

you suggest? Do you know of anybody?"

"Take the biggest jokers in world," said Shayne sleepily. "Hartman, Thompson, Maurice Rynder, oh! President of United States, Elmer Elmer—anybody."

"Johnny Olsen, the comedian?"

"Hah? Now! Comedian? Not funny in private life. Ask their wives!"

"Not funny in private life," repeated Liankin musingly. His gaze was speculative as he stared at the drooping head of the reporter. "Didn't I hear

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'em. They wouldn't go. That's it. Kidnap 'em. The Kid Kidnaper!"

"Take people without their consent? I can't do that, Louie."

"Oh, you can't, eh? Well, then you won't take nobody—no-a-body at all, eh? They won't go, that's all."

"But it isn't ethical," protested Liankin.

"What's wrong with it? Everybody has nice time, honest—come home in couple months—er' thing fine."

"Whom should I take, if I do what

you say once you were not married, Louie?"

"Whom married? Me? Ish a damn lie!"

One heroic bludge, and Shayne knocked the empty whiskey bottle to the floor, and began to sneeze.

Liankin stared at him for a long moment. Then he sprang to his feet, his blue eyes beginning to glow.

"He's right! *In vino, veritas*, as he said once."

With frenzied hands Liankin strip-

ped himself of his ruined evening clothes. He dug out his original garb of flamboyant hues. In a few moments he stood as he had first been seen upon the playing field of Meadowbrook. Stepping swiftly to the door that opened on the roof, he went out into the soft darkness. Instantly he began twisting dials and pressing buttons on the massive belt about his waist.

Like a plummet, soundless and wingless, a torpedo shape dropped out of the sky far overhead. Nearing the roof of the tall hotel, it checked its descent as lightly as a smoothly braking pneumatic elevator. Then it settled gently to within a single foot of the terrace upon which Lincoln stood. A faint drone of smoothly running machinery, and the bow port opened to permit the projection of the tubular steps.

The Kid from Mars drew and exhaled a long breath, and then climbed purposefully into his ship.

* * * * *

GENERALLY Louis Shayne awoke heavy of head, thick of tongue, and surly of disposition. To his amazement he did not awaken in such a sad plight. One moment he had been sleeping soundly, the next he was drowsily awake.

It seemed to be morning. He was conscious of a feeling of comfort and well being. The Sun was shining in a friendly fashion upon the full length of his bed, bathing him from head to foot in gentle and pleasant warmth. He yawned and stretched prodigiously, never troubling to open his eyes. He turned luxuriously over on his side for a secondary snore.

Never had his bed felt so comfortable, so cooily fitted to his form, Lincoln must have put him to bed last night after he passed out. Good old Lincoln! A crackpot, but one swell guy. He was going to have to—

Suddenly Shayne jerked wide awake. A queer thought struck him. Not in ten years had he slept in a bed where the Sun—morning or afternoon—could shine on him.

He flopped back over on his shoulders and opened his eyes. For a mo-

ment he blinked in the soft golden glow that bathed him. Bewilderedly he sought to orient himself. This was not his bed, and that wasn't the Sun!

He was lying on a long and narrow couch of some soft, resilient material that was pastel blue to the sight and velvet to the touch. About six or eight feet above his head, like a horizontal bar that paralleled the couch, was a glowing bar of golden light. Literally that—a bar of warm yellow light that did not glare. It seemed quite similar to the new tube lamps which were gaining so rapidly in popularity.

As soon as he had assimilated this odd fact, he became aware of the ceiling. No color-mad interior decorator had ever blended such colors and designs on ceilings outside of a madhouse. Yet the ceiling, taken as a whole, was soothing and pleasing in effect. When his wondering, wondering eyes sought to trace a particular column of delicate color down to its source, he saw that he could not tell where the ceiling left off and the wall began. There was no break, no line of demarcation. Walls and ceiling blended into each other as completely as the soft colors did. It was like resting under an opalescent bell jar.

Abruptly he saw the door beyond his feet. It was an opening fully eight feet high. The upper part curved inward with the gently curving ceiling and at the same time curved upward to a point on the order of a mosque top. He recognized the queer blending of architectural styles as bordering on the Gothic and the Moorish.

At this point the reporter became aware that his couch and bar of soft light were not the only ones in this strange chamber. There were two others to one side of him and three more on the other. In a neat row against the wall opposite the door stood the six of them. And they were all occupied!

Now Shayne knew he was dreaming. He sat up abruptly. He made further discoveries. He was fully dressed in his rumpled but well tailored tuxedo. There was no coverlet of any kind on his couch. The corners of the room were rounded like the joints of walls

and ceiling. There was no other furniture of any kind in the chamber. He saw no opening of any kind save that one closed door.

A audible yawn and a slight movement from the end couch caught his ear and eye. He got up and peered across the slumbering form next to him. He got a double shock, for he recognized both persons.

Colonel Henry Thomlinson snored gently beside him, also clad in evening dress. John Hartman, in dinner jacket of sober black, was the yawning, stretching gentleman on the end. In growing panic and bewilderment the reporter looked quickly in the opposite direction.

On the couch next to him reposed the plump form of Maurice Rynder, clad in maroon silk pajamas and lemon-yellow dressing gown. Beyond the vice-president of Three Dimensional Pictures was a woman. It was Elaine Elliot, looking like the Sleeping Beauty. She lay quietly there with her raven tresses framing her neck and shoulders in a halo of midheight glory.

The figure on the last couch, under an individual bar of golden light, was that of a man in a cutaway coat and pin-stripe trousers. But he was lying with his face toward the far wall, so Shayne could not recognize him.

"Now I know I'm batty," Shayne assured himself aloud. "I never got a dream like this even out of Volstead gin and corn whiskey."

At his words, John Hartman sat upright with a snap. The publisher glared around wildly. He caught sight of the sports reporter, looked beyond him, and then brought his straining eyes back to his employee.

"Shayne!" he cried in alarm. "What the hell is all this?"

"You're my dream, and you're asking me!" snorted the reporter. "Or am I awake, and you and Thomlinson have pulled another fast one—this time in sockolator?"

Maurice Rynder popped awake, puffing and blowing and staring about him in big-eyed wonder.

"Horeen!" he gasped. "I'm in heaven!"

"In an outfit like that?" derided Shayne. "Saint Peter must be color-blind."

Colonel Thomlinson started up, his lean, keen face registering baffled amazement.

"In the name of God," he breathed, "what has happened?"

"It looks like Rainbow Pilots has turned the tables on us," Hartman declared. "Ask him. He says I'm a dream, and I believe it."

A tiny scream prevented further comment. They all turned quickly.

Elaine Elliot was clutching at her hair and staring wildly around.

In a group, perhaps seeking mutual solace in proximity, the four men ran toward the girl's couch. Shayne sought in vain for the proper words of comfort to offer her.

The sound which had escaped her lips had aroused the sixth and final sleeper. The man turned over, opened his eyes, blinked. He stared in stark disbelief at the beautiful young woman next to him. Immediately he sat bolt upright. Colonel Thomlinson gave vent to a choking cry.

"Great Jupiter!" he gurgled. "The— the President of the United States!"

It was none other. The great man lifted his head in that familiar gesture of his, his solemn gaze seeking out the franchiser. He blinked once more, smiled dubiously, and looked again at the charming Elaine.

"Hello, Thomlinson," he said in his mellow baritone voice. "I thought you were in New York. I've been in numerous delicate and diplomatic situations in my life, but this is indeed a rendezvous with destiny. Can you explain it to me?"

"Mr. President—Mr. President," faltered the colonel. "I—I haven't the slightest idea what this is all about."

"No? Ah, that is John Hartman, too, is it not? At least I am in good company. You might introduce me."

The colonel got sufficient control of himself to do so. Maurice Rynder beamed happily at his introduction, then glanced down at his strictly informal attire, and became self-conscious. Shayne took it in his stride.

The reporter stood there knitting his brows and scratching his head. He pursued an elusive fragment of thought which seemed to have some bearing on this crazy situation. But he couldn't seem able to pin it down.

Elaine was a good trouper. "I am honored to make your acquaintance, Mr. President," she said, smiling. "I only hope I'm not dreaming."

"I hope I am," said Shayne fervently. "This—this beats me."

"You mean you had nothing to do with this?" demanded Thomson.

"I certainly do," Shayne came back crisply, pointedly. "But I'm not so sure of you and John Hartman."

At that instant there was a slight sound across the room. They all looked toward it, startled. The door was open.

Lambkin stood there. He was bare-headed. For the first time since Shayne had known him, the Kid from Mars was without his special radio belt. His garb was different, too. Becoming, but futuristic in cut, his slacks were pale green. His Russian-coller blouse was mauve and gold.

"Good morning, friends," he greeted in a warm voice. "You awakened a full hour before we expected you to. Welcome to Mars!"

"Mars?" repeated the President. Then he laughed pleasantly. "I recognize you now, my friend. You are the—ah—gentleman from Mars who broke up the championship polo match at Meadowbrook last week, and, more recently, other things."

"Last month, sir," corrected Lambkin courteously. "You have been in a state of suspended animation for three weeks."

CHAPTER XVIII

Where Are They?

ALL of them looked blank at this astounding remark save Elaine. She turned to glower at the gaping Maurice Rydger.

"Maurice," she said in an angry but appalled undertone, "you are going to

lead us all in Alcatraz with your mad publicity. Do you know what the penalty is for kidnaping the President of the United States?"

"Don't talk crazy," retorted the fat man with more spirit than he had ever shown. "Would I go around kidnaping people when I'm wearing clothes like this?"

Elaine became aware of her own charming dishabille. Her night-dress was as becoming as a princess gown. She looked into rosy confusion.

Shayne glanced automatically at his wrist-watch. It had completely run down. Hartman shook with visible anger.

"What sort of nonsense is this?" he roared. "Where are we? Who did this to us? How was it done?"

"Nonsense?" repeated Lambkin in the sternest voice he had yet used. "You, sir, are the perpetrator of nonsense—you and Colonel Thomson. But forgive me, I do not mean to lose my temper. I have come to escort you to breakfast. Miss Elliot"—and now his tone was coolly impersonal—"there is a boudoir at your disposal, just across the corridor. Gentlemen, there is a Martian substitute for a washroom adjoining this chamber. Come, I will show you."

Colonel Thomson surprised them all by bursting into a hearty laugh.

"All right, Lambkin, you win. I apologize to you. Now drop all this movie stuff and explain the joke to the President."

"This is not a joke, Colonel Thomson," returned Lambkin solemnly. "I'll explain gladly. But I thought you would prefer postponing it until you have broken your fast."

At his words, they realized suddenly that they were hungrier than they remembered ever having been so early in the morning.

"I demand an immediate explanation," said Hartman angrily. "Who is responsible for this high-handed outrage? How did you accomplish it? Where are we?"

"Very well," Lambkin answered crisply. "I acted upon good advice. You gentlemen refused to call a meeting of scientists to hear my story and

respond to my plea for such a little aid. All that Mars required was a visit from a few men of Earth to permit our own servants to isolate that mental condition known to you as humor.

"After you deluded me and laughed at me, I simply entered your various bedchambers and abducted you. First, each of you was placed in a state of suspended animation. Then I put you in separate cubicles in my ship, and brought you to Mars. We arrived here some twenty-four hours ago. You have been reviving under the vitamin tubes ever since. That is all."

"And how," asked the President in measured tones, "were you able to penetrate to my bedroom in the White House without detection?"

"Quite readily, sir. The rocket tubes of my ship were designed for several purposes. One purpose is to spray a cloud of anesthetizing gas over a wide area. I simply put everybody on the grounds to sleep, lowered my ship close to the roof of your residence, and entered your home unopposed. Louis, Elaine, and Rynder, I removed via the roof of the Telecast Plaza. Mr. Hartman and Colonel Thomlinson I procured by the use of a hand gas gun. You were all asleep at the moment of my entry and consequently knew nothing of it until this moment."

"Impossible!" cried the President.

"Incredible! Ridiculous!" roared Hartman and Thomlinson together.

"I don't believe it!" yelled Rynder.

ELAINÉ said nothing. Her eyes were twin pools of starry wonder as she gazed at the speaker.

"You are here," pointed out Llanckin calmly.

"That was unanswerable, wherever 'here' was."

"This is the best dream I ever had," Shayne finally broke his silence. "It practically makes sense. Kid, you're so true to form, I almost think I'm awake."

"You doubt me," said Llanckin. "You refuse to credit the evidence of your senses. And you, Louis— To think that you, of all Earthmen, refuse to believe! Look!"

He pressed a stud in a row of buttons

beside the door and pointed toward the end wall. They followed his order.

On the wall, they saw a soft glow come into being and expand outward like the light from an opening shutter on an optical machine. As they watched, it grew to a six-foot square and took on color and depth as though the wall were dissolving.

Suddenly the wall wasn't there. It was as though they stood before a magic window. They looked out upon an incredible landscape.

"A Three-dimensional color projector!" exclaimed Rynder excitedly. "Where and how did you get it, Llanckin? They haven't even been released to the theater yet."

"Again you delude yourself," said Llanckin. "You are actually looking through the wall at the scene of the Burning Desert outside this laboratory. The instrument I am employing is what your television may some day become. I suppose you would call it penetration. Look! Where on Earth is there a scene such as that?"

They looked. To left and right, stretching away toward illimitable distance, were bleak and sheer and dreary barren rock. The wrinkled crags seemed to cry aloud that they had suffered the erosion and winds of untold centuries.

Across the foreground there trotted an incredible green figure, a segment from a nightmare, a huge, eight-foot monstrosity of green skin and egg-shaped head that shambled its splay-faced course from right to left and disappeared from view beyond the edge of the screen. After this bizarre creature passed, there was no movement of life about the weird scene.

In the center lay nothing but the arid sand of a red desert. The sand seemed to glow and ache with a sullen, fiery life of its own.

Far away, in the middle distance, there twinkled and glittered the spires and minarets and towers of what appeared to be a fairy city. Through a dark and cloudless sky, in though it were a medium of smoked glass, there shone a tiny Sun. The yellow ball was about half the size of the normal Sun that warmed Earth.

It was queer, bizarre, desolate. Yet that heart-rending scene somehow made their throats ache. It made them queerly homesick for the green and familiar things of Earth.

Elsie uttered a little sobbing, choking cry.

"How weirdly beautiful! How—how terribly sad!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Hartman, passing a trembling hand across his brow. "What was that—thing?"

"You mean the green man?" asked Liankin. "That was a Kaxobian—a member of one of the interior races. They are employed at this experimental station as servants. Very likely you would consider them highly intelligent, but they compare to the ruling race of Mars as the Australian bushmen compare to your Earth Anglo-Saxons."

"Well?" started Shayne. "That's the first green frogman I ever saw that didn't come out of a bottle."

"Ah!" said Liankin, smiling. "You are thinking of your Arabian folklorists of yore?"

"No," said Shayne. "I meant spirits of another density. Go on with your lecture."

"You are looking south toward the rim of the Burning Desert," stated the solemn voice of Liankin. "The city you see in the distance is Xeorcus, capital city of Mars. The Sun at this time of the year is nearly one hundred and fifty million miles distant. You are viewing this scene from the scientific laboratory of Dneif, my mentor, who is known on Mars as Z-fourteen-Y-six-thirteen-twelve."

"Everything within this building has been adjusted to Earth conditions. It is where I spent my entire formative life. Outside, exposed to the normal conditions of Mars, even I would die in a short while. I am an exile upon my own world. When I tried, Mr. Hartman, to explain this to your Professor Strauss, he wouldn't even listen to me. Now do you believe what I told you?"

"A better hoovie set I never saw in my life," said Rynder in an awed voice. "I would give a million dollars to such an artist to paint back-drops and design sets for me."

Hartman recovered from his spell at this remark.

He whirled on the fat little vice-president and grabbed his shoulder in a cruel clutch.

"Confound you, Rynder!" he grated. "So you are in on this crazy thing, too! I might have recognized your touch."

Liankin made no sound as he pressed another button.

The scene faded back into the pastel-tinted wall. The President turned gravely.

"You ask us to believe, my friend," he said, "that yesterday we were on Earth, and today we are fifty or sixty million miles away?"

"Three weeks ago you were on Earth," said Liankin. "Even a gravity ship cannot make a spatial voyage of fifty million miles in ten hours."

"I fear I must concur in the general consensus," the President answered. "This is ridiculous."

"At least, you will come to breakfast? Dneif has gone to considerable pains to produce a typical Earthly meal. But I have included a couple of Xaxocuban fruits that I think you will like. Please feel at ease and perfectly free to ask about any and everything strange you see. I will wait for you."

IN sober silence, the six pushed in. Earthlings filed out of the room. They entered the lavatories. Liankin pointed out to them. In the washroom, the men compared notes and made a slightly disappointing discovery. Save for Shayne's watch, not one of them had so much as a penknife.

"That man is a madman," declared Hartman forcefully. "And we haven't the slightest thing we can use as a weapon."

"The Kid may be a screwball," Shayne corrected. "But we don't need any weapons to fight him. I feel safer in his company than yours. He saved my life from those spies."

The publisher reddened. "Now, Shayne, that spy business last night—"

"Three weeks ago," corrected the reporter. "I insist on my dreams being logical."

"I've already apologized," put in

Thomlinson soothingly. "I thought you were stalling us along, Shayne. I didn't know what you were up against. Don't let us quarrel now."

"No, gentlemen," added the President. "The condition is grave. It is obvious that we are being held somewhere for ransom. If we cannot work ourselves out of this predicament, we must remain calm until the F.B.I. locates us."

"Ransom?" exclaimed Snyder in cynical dismay. "Six people like us? Holy cameras, it will take the national income to do it!"

"WE might watch our chance and gang up on Laramkin—catch him off-guard," suggested the colonel hesitantly.

"Before we even know the layout of this joint?" queried Shayne acidly. "Besides, didn't you get your lesson about trying to gang the Kid from Mars? Have you forgotten the Canary Club? The Martineath warehouse?"

They finished their ablutions, accepting the queerly designed wash basins, furnished steel mirrors, oddly different combs, brushes, and absorbent towels without comment.

When they returned to the corridor, they found Laramkin and Elaine awaiting them.

Laramkin broke off a description of Martian communal life and addressed the whole group.

"At the far end of this corridor is the observation room where we will breakfast. It is the main laboratory of the building. You will find the gravity and the atmospheric pressure somewhat lessened than here, but I do not think you will experience any particular discomfort. It is in the chamber where I always meet with my tutors, a sort of common meeting-ground as it were. After breakfast, several of our scientists will wish to visit you there. I trust you will offer no objections?"

"I don't think we're in a position to object to anything at this moment," said the President slowly, with a racial smile.

"Thank you," responded Laramkin gravely. "I assure you that you will be submitted to no indignities."

CHAPTER XIX

Search for an Element

BREAKFAST proved to be a meal that Laramkin's involuntary guests never forgot.

In the first place, the setting itself owed them. It was a great, spherical chamber. Around the circular, concave wall, were banks and banks of odd looking machines and instruments. Even the metal and materials used in their construction were strange.

There were dials and gauges with unearthly symbols and marks. There were long tables and benches vaguely reminiscent of Roman design, but different in an inexplicable way.

Saved for two doors opposite each other, there were no openings. The huge room was lighted high overhead by a circle of the same golden-burred tubing as had been above each of their couches.

"Artificial sunlight," explained Laramkin simply. "I have spent my life under these rays. That is why my skin is browned like an Earthman's."

In the center of this chamber was the only jarring note, and the only familiar looking objects to the prisoners. This was a table and seven straight-back chairs. Save for the unidentifiable materials of construction, they might have come from the dining room of the Telecast Plaza. That was precisely where the design had come from.

Upon the table were what appeared to be an electric percolator, toaster, and waffle-iron. There were napkins, china, glass, and silverware. A beautiful crystal bowl in the center contained fragrant fruits that reminded Shayne of an impressionist's conception of unknown tropical varieties. Best of all, there was food similar to good old ham and eggs and coffee.

Yet about every one of these familiar things there was an alien sort of feel which made even the tangible articles they touched, such as knives and forks, seem so unreal, and yet so reasonable, as objects in a dream. Perhaps it was the sense of lightness of weight due to

the lesser gravity, or the rarefied air that made them faintly dizzy. However, the food was material, and it was delicious. Except for the exotic fruit, it was as normal a meal as they had ever eaten.

"I'm sorry I cannot offer you tobacco," said Llanckin with an apologetic air. They had concluded their breakfast without coming to blows over the little arguments that developed, pertaining to their predicament. "But the rarefied atmosphere of Mars and the appalling shrinkage of vegetation has made such a minor vice obsolete. Now, if you please, I would like to introduce the wisest scientists of my world. These savants, with your assistance, will become the saviors of Xorocula."

As if this were a signal, a door opened opposite the one through which they had entered. Five strange and incredible beings came into the laboratory.

They were not at all horrifying—quite the contrary—and they were undoubtedly human. But they were giants. The shortest and most delicately formed of the five was fully seven feet tall. All of them were thin. Not one could have been less than fifty years of age. And all of them were completely bald. They had an amazing breadth and depth of chest which indicated a great lung capacity.

Dressed in a fashion similar to that of Llanckin, they advanced. Their faces, individual and sharply distinct, were normal-featured. But the stamp of a common solemnity marked them all.

"These, my friends," said Llanckin, "are the five greatest minds of science upon Mars. They are Dnsart, Zarcoth, Bilyna, Kartyd, and Xytbas. There is no need to introduce you. They have already examined each of you and know you by name. They have been busy preparing such things as these for you while you were sleeping."

As their names were called out, each Martian stepped forward and bowed gravely. The first, Dnsart, spoke.

"In the name of the world of Xorocula I greet you, men of Earth. We feel particularly honored to receive as

our guest the President of one of your greatest nations."

His voice was deep and not unmusical. But it emanated in an accent different from any the Earthlings had ever heard before. They didn't know whether to laugh or accept the situation seriously. The President solved the matter by answering for all.

"Accustomed as I am to meeting with all kinds of people," he said in his splendid voice, "I see no reason for drawing the line of democracy here. At least, you are treating us royally if irregularly. We, perforce, respond to your greeting."

All five of the seven-foot giants listened in grave courtesy while he spoke. Then the third, Bilyna, turned eyes of onyx black upon Llanckin. He began speaking rapidly in a jargon that musically mixed gutturals, consonants, and a sort of siblant whistling together. Llanckin nodded soberly and replied in the same tongue. The five elderly giants began conferring in low tones among themselves. But their sharply alert eyes continued to study the group about the table.

At last the Kid from Mars turned to the Earthlings.

"Bilyna asked me if yours were not the voice whose intonations I adopted in learning to speak English," he explained to the President. "Before you return to Earth I will show you the radio-penetrator equipment by which we have been enabled to study Earth so closely. Now, if you are ready, they want to converse with you. They will ask you many questions, some of which may seem puzzling and strange."

"Please bear in mind that their purpose is to analyze the mental quick Earthmen have which makes them laugh in the face of adversity, jest in the face of death, and stand shoulder to shoulder to give battle to their environment, to—to whistle while they work. Don't hesitate to answer in English as they all understand your language perfectly."

Maurice Rynder banged his fist down on the table.

"I don't believe anything I'm hearing and seeing," he declared violently. "This is all fake. Five side-show giants

strutting around and sporting pig Latin, that's all they are!"

This outburst relieved the strain. Elaine laughed a bit hysterically. The others joined in, all but Shayne. The reporter was staring from Liankin to the five pale and bald-headed giants, shaking his own head slowly in frowning perplexity.

At sight and sound of the laughter, the five Martians leaned forward in solemn intensity. Then they drew back as the laughter subsided and began clucking and piping and jabbeting together like a group of excited Chinese laundrymen in a fan-tan house. In a moment they drew forward several of their queer benches and sat down.

Elaine singled out Elaine and began asking eager questions.

"Why did you laugh? Was what Rynder said humorous? If so, why?"

It wasn't any time until all five giants were asking questions on all manners of subjects and listening gravely to the varying answers. After a period of time it became apparent that they were following an involved system of their own. It was to the Earthlings, like playing a new type of cross-questions and silly answers, the rules of which they had not yet learned.

THROUGH the entire session, which lasted about two hours, not once did one of the five take down a single note or crack the slightest smile. It was the most bizarre experience the prisoners had ever had. Liankin participated in the discussion by talking incomprehensible jargon with his confederates and explaining certain points in English to the Earthlings. Shayne noted that they were slowly becoming interested in the weird interrogation in spite of themselves.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the five abnormally tall Martians gravely took their leave through the door they had entered. Liankin turned his full attention to his guests.

"Two hours at a time is long enough for each examination, according to District," he explained. "They would like to meet you here at four-hour intervals—except during rest periods and mealtimes, of course."

"What?" exclaimed the President in surprise. "How long is this to continue? Surely not as long as a session of Congress?"

"Perhaps," said Liankin seriously. "At least until the savants discover your humorous point of view. But they will certainly succeed where I have failed."

"Like hell!" exploded Maurice Rynder. "If you think I'm going to sit around and whackerack to your five stooges for six months, you're crazy. I've got to get Three Dimensional Pictures on the market. I ain't got that much time to give even to the President of the United States! Why—" Realizing just what he had said, the cinema magnate broke off in confusion.

The President glanced at the luridly attired little fat man and chuckled.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Rynder," he said dryly, "that there is little else you can do—until we are rescued."

Hartman and Thompson began to protest angrily to their apparently omnipotent host. They switched to mention of money and quickly worked their way up through hints of punishment to violent threats of reprisal. Liankin merely looked from one to the other of the indignant pair in stony silence. Elaine finally sought to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Mr. Liankin," she said in her most persuasive voice as she turned the glamer on full blast. "Surely you're not serious about keeping us prisoners any longer? Why don't you be a good sport and call all this"—she gestured prettily yet helplessly with her hands—"this off? There are so many more interesting things you and I could be doing in New York. And there are important things the President should be doing."

Liankin surveyed her soberly. His blue eyes traveled over her lovely figure, from the sable crown of her head to the satin slippers on her feet. She blushed rosy, self-consciously under his inspection, wondering how he had carried her from her bedroom to the couch upon which she had awakened. She experienced a little pang of regret that she could not remember the thrill of it.

At the same time she had to acknowledge to herself his delicacy and consideration in at least putting her boudoir negligee over her gown.

"There is nothing as interesting and important, Miss Elliot," he answered in cold courtesy, "as the outcome of this experiment. And need I remind you that it is no longer necessary for you to exert yourself in order to be kind to me?"

IT was like a dash of cold water in her face. She stamped her foot indignantly.

"Oh-b-b, yes!" she cried. "I'm not trying to be nice to you for any ulterior reason. It's you I'm thinking about. Haven't you sense enough to realize what it's going to mean when the President is missed today? Your very life is going to be the price!"

"I scarcely see what difference today will make. There has been a great deal of excitement for the past three weeks, but nothing critical, according to my radio reports. The vice-president is handling things quite nicely. Am I to infer that you are interested, in me, then, for myself alone?"

"Why, you—you conceived animated cartoons in technicolor! I wouldn't turn my head to look at you if you were the last man on Earth."

"We are not on Earth," he assured her gravely. "However, if I owe it, I thank you for your commercial interest in me while there."

Elsie was healthily normal. She had a mind and a will of her own. She couldn't resist the impulse that seized her.

Lifting her slim white hand, she slapped him squarely across the mouth.

Liamkin's head bobbed back, and an expression of astonishment crossed his features. Then his brows drew down level in anger. His hands darted out, grasped her roughly, and crushed her against his broad chest. She gave vent to a little cry of alarm as his hands bruised her. It was Shayne who laid a restraining hand upon Liamkin's shoulder.

"Mis. Kid," the reporter said reprovingly. "Gents don't manhandle ladies! They either speak 'em or kiss 'em—or

nothing. Elsie's not to blame for stringing you along. She was told to do it, or else. Lay off the gal, and I'll feed a line to your five fugitives from a frank show until their ears drop off. Why not? I've had plenty of practise with you."

Liamkin's face became tranquil again.

He released Elsie as swiftly as he had grabbed her.

"Of course," he said. "Thank you, Louis." Then he addressed all of them. "Come. I will show you your living quarters for the time you will be with us. A room has been prepared for each of you. And while it is true that I abducted all of you without your consent, I was set the example by two of you. I am sorry if you resent it, but it is too late now. All I can do is entertain you to the best of my ability and pledge you my solemn word of honor that you will be duly returned to Earth, safely and unharmed. I am sorry I lost my temper just now. You see, I had never been struck by a woman before."

HE turned and led the way out of the laboratory. In a sort of chartered silence the six Earthlings followed him. Imperiously, but solicitous of their comfort, Liamkin pointed out their private rooms.

"Your quarters are windowless, of course," he said. "But they are lighted and air-conditioned, and there is a bath adjoining each one. Whenever you like, I will gladly show you over the entire part of this building, which is Earth-conditioned. Every effort has been exerted to safeguard you from all possible danger. I do not think an accident can happen. But I must warn you not to attempt to explore or to escape without my permission."

"As I told you before, once outside of the boundary of these artificial Earth conditions, even I would succumb. You people couldn't withstand the physical change, not to mention the thousand other perils of a strange planet."

And that was distinctly that. Hartman and Thordinson, the boldest and most resentful of the group, learned it within the next forty-eight hours.

CHAPTER XX

The Funny Catalyst

THERE was no exit or opening of any kind from the part of the building of which the Earthlings were permitted the run. The various rooms and corridors were on one floor, and it was impossible to ascertain whether there were floors above or below them. The only exit they could find was the door to the laboratory where they had met the funeral five, as Shayne dubbed the somber scientists. Even this door they found impossible to open when Llamkin was not with them.

So life settled into a queer routine of two hours of oral examinations and four hours off. As the quizzes proceeded, they found themselves feeling less and less like doing anything between azev ratings. For the examinations became progressively harder. By the third one, the Martian servants began using various strange machines to check reactions. It became more like going through an exhaustive clinic each time.

And still the five pale giants were not satisfied. In desperation, Shayne and Ryder put on a vaudeville act to make them laugh. When that didn't work, they staged an act with Elaine in it. Still the sober-faced Martians did not even smile. It became a game and then a point of honor to make these queer beings laugh.

Even Llamkin grew soberer and more anxious with each meeting. Twice he had Shayne give a disquisition on wit, humor, and point of view. The President, who was used to applause and laughter at his own rants, tried everything he knew from parody to political speeches, and failed miserably.

Then one morning when Llamkin went to awaken Elaine, the girl did not respond to his knock. He called her name and received no answer. But he heard a furtive sort of movement within, and he opened the door. An amazing scene met his eyes.

Seated languidly in a Martian chair was Elaine. She was in the grip of two

huge green Kanobian servants, one of whom was holding her right forearm and was on the verge of making an intravenous injection from a hydrosyphon—a Martian syringe plant which contained the nidor drug that produced a hypnosis and a complete paralysis of the brain.

"Stop!" cried Llamkin in a terrible voice. He sprang forward. "By what authority do you dare invade—"

He could get no farther.

"The masters ordered it," articulated the second Kanobian in a hissing, sibilant voice, while the first green man simply jabbed down with his deadly needle butt.

Furious, Llamkin whipped a slender ray gun from his blouse, aimed it, and pressed the finger stud. A thin lance of fire shot across in front of the indifferent girl and struck the Kanobian in the stomach. The huge green man winced and then simply exploded in a puff of billowing gas. He vanished into nothingness. Llamkin swung his deadly weapon at the second Kanobian who promptly fell to his knees and began babbling for his life.

Llamkin hesitated. He examined Elaine quickly and saw that she was not yet harmed, having merely had the first insulating dose of the drug which would soon wear off.

"Very well," he said grimly. "Get out of here, and take this message to Daeird. I will not permit the slightest harm to come to any one of our guests. I will not tolerate the smallest dangerous experiment. We do not know how Earth beings will react to Kanobian drugs. Now, go!"

The green giant fled precipitantly from the chamber. Llamkin glanced to see that the ventilating system was properly removing the gaseous cloud that had been the first Kanobian, and then he set about reviving the girl. When Elaine came out of her stupor she had no recollection of what had passed. Sighing in relief, Llamkin forebore telling her. There was no need alarming her, and it was up to him to see that nothing of like import happened again.

He intended speaking to Daeird about the ugly occurrence, but he did not have

the opportunity to do so before the next period of interrogation.

It was on the third day—about the tenth or eleventh consultation—and everybody was desperate. Mentally exhausted, doubly weary of talk and argument and experiment, the nerves of the prisoners were worn almost to the snapping point. The guinea had gone stale.

After about an hour of futile questioning, which did not elicit even a civil reply, the five giants solemnly shook their heads. They had been growing colder looking by the minute. They withdrew to one wall and conferred in low tones.

"If we only had a blackboard, we might give them a chalk talk," said Shayne wearily. "We've tried everything else."

"What is that?" Llamkin asked anxiously.

Shayne sighed. "Okay, here's another lecture, folks. A chalk talk is one of the things vaudeville artists starve at in this enlightened era. A man gives a nonsense lecture as he draws pictures on a blackboard. Then suddenly he turns the picture upside down, and it's something altogether different from what he has been drawing and talking about. And I feel like a chalk talk illustration right now."

To his mild astonishment, Llamkin grew overwhelmingly interested.

"That is supposed to be funny?" he inquired. "If I follow you, it is building up one point of view in the audience and then suddenly switching them to another without warning."

"I didn't mean it, Kid, but you get the idea."

"It is the most sensible thing I have yet heard any of you mention as being considered humorous on Earth. Your suggestion has possibilities. And I have a medium with which you can work in my boyhood classroom. Excuse me for a few minutes."

"Mad Anthony—riding to the bounds again," growled Shayne as Llamkin strode rapidly out of the laboratory.

"He's not mad?" said Elaine in quick reticement. "Your wisecracks are beginning to sound like Joe Miller to me. And you've talked yourself into a

square corner this time. I only hope you can draw."

THEFORE an argument could take its place, Daciel and Ellyn came forward to rejoin them. The other three scientists wheeled out a queer and ponderous machine they had not used before.

"We have come to the conclusion," said Daciel gravely, "that we have been applying the wrong method. Instead of exhausting you with trying to formulate into spoken language such an obviously intangible and elusive thing as humor, we have decided to use this machine. In English, it might be called a decalculator. This machine—you can see our colleagues adjusting it there—is a sort of psycho-analyzer."

"Electrically impaled, it probes to the bottom of a mind and transcribes every process of thought and memory upon a set of metal plates. By using the decalculator on you in this fashion, we can consult the plates without troubling you any further with questions. It will only take a few minutes for each of you. The process is painless. All you have to do is seat yourself there under the head-cap and relax. I will ask Miss Elliot to oblige first."

The girl looked uneasily at the machine. It fairly resembled a barber chair crossed with a hair permanentener. Instead of a number of wires ending in curler attachments, a veritable forest of wires ran into a shining, inverted metal bowl above the chair. The bowl looked like a sun-lamp or a hair dryer. The wires led to a battery of dials and complicated recording equipment.

"It looks like an inventor's nightmare, doesn't it?" said the President. "But no harm has come to us yet."

"I'll do it," Elaine said wearily. "Anything for a laugh."

"That smells like an old gag to me," said the disgruntled reporter.

Elaine did not deign to reply. She walked across the floor and seated herself as the three giants at the machine directed. It was a comfortable seat at that.

One of the trio spun an adjustment wheel. It lowered the gleaming bowl until it covered and encircled her head

down to the line of her eyebrows. Another took up his station by the recording apparatus. The third moved over to a panel board of studs and switches and looked expectantly at Dneiri.

At that instant, Liamkin returned to the huge chamber. He took one look, and his eyes widened in horror. He dropped the paraphernalia he was carrying and cried out sharply in the weird chattering that passed for language between the giants.

"Hold!" he said. "What are you doing?"

Dneiri looked at him sadly.

"We are forced to the last resort, my son. There is nothing left but to use the decalculator."

"The decalculator? No! You can't do that, Dneiri!"

"It will explore the deepest nooks of the human mind," replied Dneiri. "If the exploitation of humor is there—and it must be there—we will find it."

"But you know the subject will come from the decalculator a babbling idiot!" cried Liamkin. "That would be worse than murder. We can't do that."

Dneiri shrugged. "It is harsh, but it is certain."

"Have you told them what it will do to them?"

"No," admitted Dneiri honestly. "It would only cause possible violence."

"And rightly," Liamkin cried angrily. "Xytrus, don't you dare depress that primary switch! Elaine," he burst into English, "get—"

SILENCE! Dneiri almost shouted in cold fury, still speaking his native tongue. "What has come over you, Liamkin? Your whole life has been dedicated to this sacred purpose. The very life of our planet depends on waking our people from their apathy. We ask nothing of other worlds. We have the means of working out our own salvation. All we need is that tiny lever, that minute spark which will rejuvenate the stagnant and passive minds of our race. What are the heads of six Earthlings weighed against the entire world of Xnorcain?"

"What are they? I pledged my solemn word that they would be returned to their native planet unharmed. You

promised me that when you sent me to Earth. And that's the way it shall be if the whole Solar System perishes! Xarcol, get that Earth woman out of that chair!"

"No!" countermanded Dneiri in a commanding voice. "Instead, start the generation of the decalculator."

The seriousness of the situation communicated itself to the Earthlings, though they could not understand a single word of what was being said. But they could read actions, and Liamkin was giving them plenty to read. He leaped forward to the center of the chamber, made a lightninglike move of his hands. From inside his blouse he brought forth a glittering, needlelike tube.

"Touch that starting switch," he said in a terrible voice, "and I will blast all five of you out of existence as I would a Krulogru monster!"

This was a showdown with a vengeance. The five giants stared at Liamkin in calm horror. It was obvious that their prize pupil was suddenly bereft of his senses. They must consider this new complication and their own imminent annihilation with philosophic abstraction. There was neither panic nor excitement in their attitudes. They simply stood there, arrested at the crucial point of their experiment, while they contemplated this alarming development.

"Liamkin," finally asked Dneiri mildly, "are you mad? Would you turn upon your own kind, your only friends—your entire race—for the sake of a few alien folk? Put away that ray tube, my son, and listen to reason."

"The only reason I'll listen to is your command to release that Earth woman from that decalculator, Dneiri. You are mad! Deliberately to make an imbecile out of that girl after pledging your sacred oath to protect each of those Earthlings from all harm. Release her now—or die!"

There was utter silence for the space of a score of heartbeats while Dneiri reflected on this ultimatum. Then he calmly raised his hand to give the starting signal to Xytrus.

"I will die," he chose, without the slightest emotion in his voice. "We

will all die. And the blood of the entire world of Xeorcula shall be upon your faithless, congregate head."

At this fatal instant Blyna caught Dacri's arm.

"Wait! I see it. Liankin has fallen in love with this Earth woman!"

Dacri started slightly. He looked swiftly from his monstrous pupil to Elaine Elliot and back again. For the first time he was visibly perturbed.

"Liankin!" he cried, aghast. "Is this true? Has Blyna read you right? Do you love this woman?"

STARTLED, Liankin stared at the compassionate face of Blyna. Then he turned and looked at Elaine.

The girl was watching him intently, uncomprehendingly, with steady, level eyes as she strove to understand what was taking place. The meeting of their gazes was like an electric shock to Liankin. A queer dizziness, and a sense of exaltation, seized him as Blyna's accusation, and Dacri's question burned in his mind. Did he love Elaine Elliot—an Earth woman?

"By the elder gods of Xeorcula!" he cried in a strained and husky voice. "I do! I, a son of Xeorcula, a servant of science dedicated from infancy to this magnificent attempt to save my planet and my people—I have fallen in love with a woman of Earth who despises and laughs at me."

Slowly he lowered his head and covered his face with his trembling hands, the ray tube forgotten. Hot, stinging tears of grief and shame and mortification burned his eyes. The five giants waited patiently, making no overt moves at all. It was like a slow-motion dull spot in a movie scenario frozen of a moment of sheer, tense drama.

It was like aiming a cannon that squirted water. . . .

The incongruity, the ironic jest, the stark insanity of the thing abruptly smote him. Liankin experienced an uncontrollable impulse. Something Fuchsia, inglich, perverse and devilish seemed to burst in his heart and well up through his brain in wave after wave of ironic glee. The queer and unpredictable god of laughter suddenly had him by the throat. Liankin low-

ered his hands, threw back his head, and laughed.

For the first time since Louis Shayne had known him, the Kid from Mars was shouting with laughter!

But the stunned perplexity of the Earthlings was nothing, compared with the sheer incredulity of the five giants who knew what the situation was all about. They simply stood like cigarette-store Indians and gaped at the man who laughed.

"Can't you see?" gasped Liankin, going into a fresh gale at sight of Dacri's ludicrous face. "The incongruity of it all? I—a son of Xeorcula—with fifty million miles of space and twenty thousand tomorrows of evolution between us—in love with a woman of Earth. Can't you see it's screamingly funny? Louis Shayne was right— He explained it to you yesterday— It's all in the point of view!"

Liankin grew so weak that he collapsed upon the floor to lie there and shake with helpless mirth.

Slowly the idea dawned upon the Martians. Blyna was the first to smile. Kartyl let out a yelp like a kicked pup. Zarcol uttered a croaking sound like a halibut in the marsh. Xytrox cackled shrilly, like an old maid in a village choir.

Dacri snorted. That snort did it. It seemed to clear away the cobwebs of five thousand years.

"That's it—that's it!" Dacri shouted, his words racing hysterically ahead of his willing mirth, ideas clouds scudding before the wind of laughter. "We sent Liankin to bring Earthmen to us for study, but first we made an Earthman out of him. We see their comic point of view, not through their analyses, but through Liankin's eyes. He is the catalyst which presents their point of view!"

Instantly a chorus of Martian voices took up the song of laughter. For the first time in five thousand years, men of Xeorcula were shaking and rocking in hilarious mirth. They lay down on the floor in their hysteria, and rolled in Gogmagmag plee.

Six bewildered and perplexed Earthlings sat uncomprehending in their seats and stared blankly. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

The Point of View

LAMKIN recovered first. He got to his feet and wiped the tears from his eyes. While the five scientists continued to shout with laughter, he motioned the five Earthmen to withdraw. Then he soberly approached the decalculator and raised the metal barret from Elaine's head with his own hands. He was grave now as he looked deep into her eyes, which were like the heart of a Kalaard blossom.

"Come, Elaine," he said in a tender voice, holding out his hand to her. "You are going back to Earth."

"I am going back?" she said, laying her slim hand in his as naturally as if it belonged there. "And what about the others?"

"They are going with you. Your mission, and mine have been accomplished."

"Then—then you are going with us?"

"Only to take you home."

"You are coming back to—to this place?"

"Of course. It is my home."

"They laughed. Lamkin, what made them laugh? I never heard you laugh before."

"Would you really like to know?"

"Yes, I would. I don't understand. It—it seemed terrible, in a way. For a moment I thought you were going to kill them."

"It was terrible, what they were going to do to you. And then Silyna discovered for us that I love you."

He said it in such a matter-of-fact way that its significance was not apparent to her for a minute.

"They were going to do something awful to me, and you—you whipped them because you—loved me?"

"Yes. And that was funny, as we laughed. And now they know how to laugh and what makes them laugh. Since they understand it themselves, they can teach it to all our people."

Tears sprang to Elaine Elliot's eyes. She placed her other hand in his.

"I don't think it's very funny, Lamkin," she said in a low voice. "I love you, too. I knew it when I slapped you."

This was a right to the heart and a left to the solar plexus. Lamkin's blue eyes widened in wonder and frank disbelief. Yet there was a dawning hope, a sort of relieve-from-bell expression there that made Elaine want to cry. So she did.

"Elaine? Elaine?" he murmured softly as he gently enfolded her in his strong arms. Then, after a precious moment: "Silyna told a gentleman either Spanish or Kalaard a lady, or does nothing. What must I do?"

Smiling through her tears, she raised her face toward his, and Lamkin did the proper thing.

"To think," she whispered, "that you couldn't figure things out for yourself. One of those—those giants had to discover it for you. How could Silyna have seen what your own heart didn't know?"

"I guess," Lamkin answered softly, "because Silyna is a woman."

Elaine stared at the smallest of the

[Turn Page]

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new power came into my life. I had all kinds of terrific, astonishing, almost magical, experiences. Power brought to me a vision of new, wonderful victory, and I have been accomplishing every wonderful thing of my life ever since. What a change it was! I never knew could be more than one thing. I was a beautiful being, alive a lovely man, a conqueror and a light upon the world, and my wife and family now enjoy the best of life. I am here for always and forever. In addition to these wonderful benefits, I have a great power in my life. I am today no longer one of the commonest of men, but I have learned how to draw upon the infinite God-

less, under any and all circumstances.

Yes, I'm only God and you are His wonderful Power at the God-law that I use. It is not telling to you, but wherever I am, I am that and proper for you to have. In you believe that it will come much to this one—just a power manifested in a letter, addressed to Mr. Frank B. Williams, 1001 N. Main Street, Tulsa, Okla., giving you the story of the most wonderful things of the century. And the same power I use in my life for you. You will be able to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free of charge. The address given—Dr. Frank B. Williams, Tulsa, Okla., Tulsa, Okla.—Copyright 1935 Frank B. Williams.

great, bald-headed creatures. The Martians' nervous mirth had subsided. Still smiling, they gathered around Liamkin and Elaine, clucking and talking together in soft, marveling tones.

Impulsively the Earth girl reached forth her hand and laid it upon the hand of Billyn. The glimmers responded with a caressing squeeze. A bond of feminine understanding which recognized no caste, no creed, no world, was cemented between them.

"Go, Elaine with the other Earthlings who linger at the door," said Dnsirf kindly. "We must confer with Liamkin."

Elaine looked up at Liamkin. He swept her joyfully up into his arms and smiled tenderly and then kissed her lightly upon the brow.

"I will join you soon, beloved Elaine," he assured her.

At the doorway Maurice Synder voiced the opinion of all the Earthmen.

"Now if that ain't a helluva thing to laugh at. These franks are crazy!"

"Yes, wasn't it?" agreed Elaine calmly. And that was all they got out of her.

IT was late when Liamkin entered the wing of the sleeping quarters in search of Elaine. The others had long since given up the puzzle and gone to bed. Elaine was wide awake and waiting when Liamkin tapped gently at her door. Quickly she admitted him.

Advancing with shining eyes, he kissed her heartily. Then he placed her in a chair and dropped down upon a hassock beside her and began to laugh quietly.

"Well, it's all settled," he finally explained. "I know this Louis Sflayne and all the rest still do not believe they are on Mars. They do not believe any of us are Martians, and it's just as well. It is very funny, and it makes no difference. Don't wrinkle your own fair brow in perplexity, my darling. I know that you have your own moments of doubt, but you alone of them all shall have proof that your mind cannot refute. We are returning to Earth in the morning just as we came to Mars.

"Dnsirf and the others are already placing your slumbering compatriots in

a renewed state of suspended animation. They shall be returned to their own beds in their own homes exactly as they were when I abducted them. It will all seem like a dream to them—as if they had taken an overdose of those absurd Rainbow Slumber Vitamin Pills."

Elaine wrinkled her nose prettily at this thought and began to laugh. Liamkin, having discovered the magic secret of laughter, experienced no difficulty in joining her.

"Wouldn't it be funny if they gave testimonials to the Rainbow Company?" and Elaine, then, swiftly sobbing: "But how about me?"

"Yes, my sweet, shall return to Earth in full consciousness of the voyage. Dnsirf is taking us back so he can return the gravity ship to Mars. I shall remain on Earth."

"But, Liamkin, I thought you were going to give plans and inventions and scientific knowledge—the secret of your space ship to mankind. What about the gifts and honors your guests were to take back?"

Liamkin's face grew sad again.

"After I related in detail to Dnsirf and the others all that happened to me, it was decided that Earth is not yet ready for such tremendous advances in science. Only when all mankind has grown together in a bond of brotherhood and common humanity will it be safe to give man greater weapons than they already possess. Minor scientific achievements, yes. I am to work them out gradually, as though I were developing them upon Earth. I shall food them to my adopted planet as my judgment tells me they are ready to receive them.

"Of course, I will secretly build a radio-penetrator machine so I can keep in touch with my mentors here on Mars. Who knows, soon perhaps, men of Xorcula will again return to Earth bearing even greater gifts that I have promised. In the meantime, it must be as though my trip had never been. In all my conscious moments I shall blot every reference to Mars out of my speech and out of my mind. Elaine, Elaine, for your sweet sake I am renouncing my own world for yours.

"My mission has been accomplished, thanks mainly to you and Louis Shayne, and I am free to go. I am virtually an Earthman in everything save the incidents of birth. I know I'll be dumb in many ways until I catch on. But, Elaine, will you have an Xanthian collected? Will you marry the—Kid from Mars?"

"Will I? Will I?" cried Elaine fiercely. "Just let anybody try to keep me from it! We can live on my income until you adjust yourself to our way of life and make a place for yourself. But, darling, you say we have been absent a month. How are we going to clear you of a kidnapping charge? How—"

Liamkin interrupted her with a kiss. "Don't worry your lovely head about that for a minute," he said, chuckling. "They'll be returned as mysteriously as they were taken, and no harm done. Do you think these men are going to tell such a wild story as theirs to a disbelieving world? As for income, John Hartman has a fortune in uncut diamonds that belongs to me. There are a thousand things I can turn my talents to on Earth.

"But always my most important task will be that of loving you. Come, my beloved, and I will show you how Decid is putting our friends in cold storage for their voyage—putting a few jokers in a cold deck, as Confucius would say."

* * * * *

IT was dusk when Louis Shayne awoke. He roused himself with a start and gazed wildly about him. He rubbed his eyes and looked around disbelievingly. He was in his own bed in the post-house suite of the Telecast Plaza.

Uttering a wild cry, he threw aside the bedclothes and bounded to his feet. He rushed madly into the living room, halted in amazement.

Sitting in an easy-chair, properly dressed for the evening, was a perfectly calm Liamkin. He was reading the newspaper accounts of the mysterious reappearance of the President of the United States, the eminent capitalist, Colonel Thomlinson, and the well known publisher, John Hartman, after

an inexplicable absence of nearly two months.

He looked up quickly at the sports reporter.

"Better hurry and get dressed, Louis," he advised. "We have a dinner date with Elaine."

"You—what—huh?" spluttered Shayne. He was all but speechless while incoherence and chaos battled for possession of his mind. "Is—how—Hell, that wasn't any dream! Or—or was it?"

"Get dressed," repeated Liamkin, stretching and yawning in a completely normal fashion. "I've been waiting for you."

Without another word, Shayne turned and stumbled toward the bathroom. He turned on the cold shower and stepped into the stall without removing his pajamas.

He was still in a daze an hour later when he sat in the cocktail lounge of the hotel in company with Liamkin and Elaine. With the third stiff drink he began to thaw out. He started to talk.

"There's no use trying to pass this business off as a joke," he said in a weary voice. His sharp eyes were looking searchingly from Liamkin to Elaine. "I know damned well that was no dream. You pulled a fast one on us all, Liamkin. But he a good guy and tell me how you did it. Were we cooped up out on Long Island somewhere? But no—the papers say Hartman and Thomlinson were missing two months. And the President!

"The F.B.I. boys would have found us long before this. We must have been on some desert really. You, that's all! That desert scene of red, burning sands we saw. Where were we, Kid? In the Arabian Desert?"

"No," answered Liamkin, exchanging smiling glances with Elaine.

THE orchestra began playing a request number, a number requested by Elaine. It was "Stardust."

"No, of course not!" went on Shayne, knitting his brows in intensive thought. "The architecture of that place—that crazy laboratory—those giants from a movie set—they were so real. I— Oh, hell, Liamkin, I give up! Tell me the

truth. Are you really from Mars? I won't laugh, and I swear I'll believe whatever you say."

Liamkin got to his feet and held out his arms to Elaine. She rose to dance with him.

"Louie," said Liamkin solemnly, "I wouldn't kid you for anything in the world. Of course, I'm the Kid from Mars! Mars—Arizona."

Then he and Elaine looked into each other's eyes and burst into a gale of laughter. Still laughing, they moved arm in arm out to the dance floor.

Louis Shayne stared after them, his jaw slack, his eyes blank. His right hand was clutching his half-emptied liquor glass.

"I don't get it," he said at length. "It must be the point of view."

COMING NEXT ISSUE

*A Non-Stop Trip from Prehistoric
Times to the Future World*

IN

A MILLION YEARS TO CONQUER

A Complete Book-Length Novel of An Eternal Quest

By HENRY KUTTNER

Say good-bye to waxy blades—
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The Ally of Science

A Guest Editorial

By **ARTHUR K. BARNES**

Famous Scientific Author and Creator of the Garry Cuthie Stories

IN the public mind, the relationship of science fiction to Science is that of sycophant, a sort of adolescent hanger-on basking in reflected glory. Yet a close examination of this relationship will reveal a curious truth: that the power of Science is easily over-estimated, while the importance of science fiction is just as easily under-rated.

There is a widespread idea throughout the country today that scientists hold the absolute key to solving the nation's social and economic difficulties. The public believes that formulas can be evolved to solve social difficulties as magically as they get results in natural sciences.

That notion is wrongfully conceived. Dr. Wesley C. Mitchell, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, recently debunked it when he declared that all of the scientists in the country put together do not know enough to solve many of the problems a democracy faces.

Scientific research is a social process as much as business, or politics, or religion, and as such is interwoven with other social processes, influencing them and being influenced by them.

The idea that Science is self-sufficient—which is the fundamental fallacy of Technocracy—is a dangerous misconception. Science will achieve miracles, but not without outside help.

Here we approach the important role that science fiction plays. It is the function of literature to fuse and integrate the disparate elements of life. Science fiction, by popularizing the advancement of Science, paves the way for ready public acceptance of the above-mentioned miracles.

History is full of examples of bigotry and ignorance stifling scientific advances. Thanks to the public press, technical journals, and particularly science fiction, however, we shall see little of this in the future.

Its beneficent propaganda is smoothing the path that Science is traveling toward human betterment; by introducing the transcendent scope of Science to minds in business and political and religious fields, it is already preparing to bring the promise of Science to triumphant fruition.

Science fiction would not exist without Science, it is true; but it is conceivable that even mighty Science might find the going a bit rougher without the aid of its little ally, science fiction.



Arthur K. Barnes





THE LIFE STORY OF GALILEO de GALILEI WHO FIRST USED THE TELESCOPE

ONE OF THE GREAT BRAGGARTS AFTER THE DARK AGES, GALILEO BRAGGART LEFT AFTER SEVENTEEN CENTURES OF SCIENTIFIC DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE, HIS PLANNING BEING DENIED THE FIRST COMPOUND TELESCOPE. HE WAS THE FIRST MAN IN HISTORY TO SEE THE CANTERS OF THE MOON, THE RINGS OF SATURN, THE MOONS OF JUPITER, THE PHASES OF VENUS, THE SUN-SPOTS AND THE MIRACULOUS STARS OF THE MILKY WAY!



GALILEO de GALILEI—
BORN 1564—DIED 1642



EARLY TELESCOPE



WAS A BOY CALLED THUNDER WITH HIGH-ANGLED TONGUE. AT 16 HE WENT TO LEARN MECHANICS IN A CATHEDRAL, HE DISCOVERED THE LAWS OF THE PENDULUM WHICH MADE POSSIBLE THE MODERN CLOCK. SINCE THERE WERE NO CLOCKS IN HIS DAY, GALILEO TOLD THE BISHOP WITH HIS OWN FINGER—OBEY!



WHEN AT 25 GALILEO STARTLED THE WORLD BY DISCOVERING TWO NEWTONS—ONE IS PULSING AND THE OTHER I PULSED FROM THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA, PROVING THAT BOTH COLOR THE AIR AND SHALLOUTHELY THE SHUTTERED ARISTOTLE'S THEORY, BELIEVED FOR CENTURIES AND ASKED QUESTIONS, THAT THE HEAVEN WOULD FALL OFF, BUT THE UNIVERSITY SUPERSTITION, CRYING IN HORROR, CALLED GALILEO A HERETIC AND SOULLESS!

Next Issue: SIR WILLIAM PERKIN,

The World Without

A Complete Hall of Fame Novelet

By BENSON HERBERT

CHAPTER I

The Challenge

AROUND the dinner-table, in the fashionable evening clothes of the day, were gathered all the white people worthy of note in Cairo. Above their subdued conversation could be heard the factual voice of Mr. Farling, the mathematician. Broad-shouldered, stout, but not fat, he dominated the company and delivered his speech with the gusto and rhetoric of an orator. He was a perfect type of dinner guest.

He would emphasize a point of his discourse with such a violent blow of his fist on the table that it threatened to split the wine.

Opposite him, with glowing eyes, sat Dr. Kington, philosopher and lecturer on development. He was, hard frame, long artistic features, and hair of the color and texture of fine copper wires, were in other contrast to the appearance of the speaker.

For many years than either of them would care to admit, they had waged a wordy war, mainly through the medium of the press. Few were the scientific controversies in which the one participated without the opposition of the other. Now, for the first time, they had encountered each other in person. The guests who knew the inside story wet their lips in anticipation.

Their visible heat had cooled too late, and with a deep sense of regret, the trouble he might cause by leaving both to the same dinner. He trembled at the thought of the consequence of his tactless act. What nonsense was Mr. Farling saying now—

"And it is my firm opinion, built upon indisputable theory, that our Universe is composed of a great number of three-dimensional worlds. They exist side by side in a fourth dimension, just as the two-dimensional leaves of a book lie side by side in a third dimension."

Mr. Farling droned on. The host wondered if his idea of allowing everyone present to speak upon his own special subject badly was as good as he had first thought it. His wondering was suddenly terminated by a low, highly cultured, monotone voice. The hostess had happened at last. Dr. Kington had interrupted the thread of Mr. Farling's discourse.

"I beg to question that latter statement of yours, Mr. Farling. Such an utterly absurd

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Some stories are forgotten almost as soon as they are printed. Others survive the acid test of time.

Because Benson Herbert's brilliant story, "The World Without," has stood this test, we are nominating it for SCIENTIFICTION'S HALL OF FAME.

In each issue we will nominate—and reprint—another favorite of the past.

Will you vote for your favorite? Write and tell us what it is.

We hope in this way to bring a new permanence to the science fiction game of yesterday and to perform a real service for the science fiction devotees of today and tomorrow.



idea can have no foundation when opposed by the doctrine of the very foremost brain of the last century. I am referring to the greatest and profound scientist, the Frenchman, Henri Poincaré."

"Henri Poincaré? He was a mathematician, but he was also a philosopher. Like all philosophers, he was a dreamer!"

A buzz of excited voices swept around the table, for this was a direct attack upon Kington.

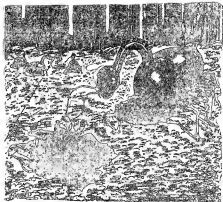
DEVELOPMENTS after that threatened to degenerate into mere discussion and became a brawl, in which the excited guests did not hesitate to join. The affair promised to be a welcome relief from the boring speeches which had hitherto marked the evening. The host's voice was heard occasionally above the tumult, pleading but failing.

"Now, gentlemen, do be a little more quiet, please!"

Drinks were brought to an abruptly silent stillness, broken only by faint whisperings. The booming voice of Farling had suddenly roared out, commanding everyone to shut up.

"Dr. Kington," he said in a quieter tone,

A Strange New Realm Beyond All Sense



An incredible, eighteenth monster, ten yards long, was merely feeling his head with a set of crocodiles.

now that silence had been restored, "could direct experimental evidence convince you of the truth of my assertion?"

"It certainly would," Klington smiled sarcastically.

"If you care to call at my bungalow tomorrow evening, I shall be pleased to offer you such evidence."

Klington did not fail to keep the appointment. He was led into the bungalow by Parky himself. They were both somewhat stiff and cold in manner as they walked to the dining room. Klington brightly took a seat.

He was instantly aware of a strange sweetish aroma that faintly pervaded the atmosphere of the room. But, on looking around, he could not see its source. His subconscious stood before him in his characteristic Colossus of Rhodes attitude, with legs wide apart. Parky began to speak.

"You probably know that the firm of construction engineers, for which I work, is at

present building a dam across the White Nile in order to facilitate irrigation."

The philosopher nodded assent.

"While excavating for the foundations on the bank of the river, the workmen came across a sealed chamber hollowed out in rock face. Within the chamber was discovered a sarcophagus. It was immediately transported to my bungalow, en route to the British Museum. There it is, behind your chair."

Klington turned his head and perceived the origin of the odor. It was a stately highly receptacle of the most type. An inspection of the interior showed nothing more startling than mummified remains and a scroll of some material, probably papyrus, with an inscription on the outer surface.

"I understand you know something about archaeology," said Parky. "Can you tell me what these hieroglyphics mean?"

"Certainly. . . This is rather strange. It means—before you started, this was. Very

and Reason—but Not the Mind of Man?

peculiar. But what does this have to do with the question?"

"You will soon see."

PARLING took the scroll and unrolled it. As William it he revealed a flexible bar of some bright purplish material, about three feet long and two inches wide. One end of the bar was fitted into a small transparent globe containing a yellow liquid. The bar could apparently slide right through the globe, since a groove had been made for it.

Parling examined a confident, overbearing manner and the light of triumph gleamed in his eyes. He pushed the rod till the end projected about four inches beyond the other side of the globe.

"I found it entirely by accident," he said softly.

"Found what?" said Kington, puzzled yet a little contemptuous.

"The secret, of course," said Parling. "How watch the end of the bar carefully."

Slowly he continued to push the rod through the bowl. All at once Kington began to think he was being hypnotized.

He could no longer see the end of the rod. Four inches from the bowl there was firm solid matter. Beyond that was nothing! Parling chuckled at his astonishment.

"You're wondering where the end of it has gone, eh? Well, you see that it's perfectly flexible. Just where it ends, it has undergone a double right-angle bend. Through some images properly construed upon it, no doubt, by the presence of the liquid in the globe, one of these bends is in the fourth dimension. The other bend naturally brings it into some other world parallel to our own. It certainly is not in our world." He passed his hand through the space where the missing end of the bar would normally have been. "I defy you to explain the phenomenon in any other way."

Kington was decidedly skeptical.

"How do I know you aren't tricking me?" he demanded.

Parling scowled and thrust a finger before the other's eyes. It was stiff, lifeless and almost brittle.

"See this finger? I placed my hand on the rod and moved it along toward the vanished end, attempting to follow the bend into another world. I succeeded! This finger is what it cost me. The chamber against the other end of the rod being on the surface of a planet whose billions to one, it is not surprising that my finger emerged into the brilliant cold of outer space."

Kington's lean face showed a curious mixture of expressions. Clearly his doubt struggled with conviction. Parling was speaking again as he clamped the rod and globe to a mechanism on the table.

"With the aid of this peculiar arrangement, I can project the bar along the fourth dimension for any desired distance. It will be correct in the two-thousandth part of a centimeter. I rigged it up this morning, as it would be ready for you. In order to convince you completely, I propose to make a journey into one of the many universes parallel to our own. In your philosophical courage equal to such a trip?"

There was only one answer that a man like Kington could give to such a challenge.

"But how can you be sure that the world we enter will be hospitable? It is not only necessary to land on the surface of a planet. That world will have to be moving at the same speed as ours and in the same direction. Otherwise it will be impossible to transfer from one to the other. Also, of course, the correct atmospheric and temperature conditions will have to be found."

"That's easily arranged. Nothing simpler. First of all, we'll fix the end of the bar at a certain distance and slide a thermometer along it. Then we'll send out a barometer, a container to get a sample of the air to be analyzed, and a camera to see how far from the surface of the planet we are. If that scheme isn't suitable, we'll simply alter the distance by means of the vibrator and try another. Shall we start now?"

Cautiously they began the hunt for a suitable cosmos. Kington soon lost the last traces of doubt. The two men forgot all their former antagonism in the cosmic interest of the search. They became as enthusiastically excited as a couple of school-boys.

The method adopted for projecting the thermometer along the fourth dimension was ingenious yet simple. A loop of cord was passed round the rod and attached to the instrument. With the help of a steel spring, flexible enough around the bar, the thermometer could easily be pushed along it without the hands of the operator coming in contact with the other world. Since the thermometer was bound to the bar, it was forced to follow the bend into the fourth dimension. Other objects were treated similarly.

In all the first attempts, the mercury in the thermometer was frozen solid. After a week's work, they found the end of the bar melted clean off. Apparently the first attempt had projected it into the interior of a sun.

By this time the microphages had been removed. But Parling secretly retained the purple rod and globe in order to continue the experiment.

At last they discovered a world whose temperature was quite tolerable, only eight degrees Centigrade. Disappointment awaited them on analyzing a sample of the atmosphere, however. An uncomfortably large percentage of chlorine was present. But this did not deter them. Kington suggested obtaining gas tanks with small tanks of liquid oxygen.

They took a photo with a shockproof-shuttered camera, weighted to swing the lens toward the center of gravity of the new world. A firm, grayish ground was revealed about forty feet away. Long, slender, black stumps stood ten feet high and five yards apart. The clearness of the print indicated that the ground was almost at rest relative to Earth.

AFTER getting a rope ladder, they came all up their final difficulty. The flexible bar could not possibly bear their weight. But even this the two scientists managed to overcome.

All of the ladder, except a foot of one end, was projected into the outer world. The visible end of the ladder was fastened to a slow strength anchored deep in the wall, and then disappeared entirely from the bar.

The vertical in the outer world was inclined at an angle of thirty degrees in relation to that of Earth. To transfer themselves from one world to another, all the destruction-travelers had to do was grasp the visible rope of the ladder. Then they could feel along it with their hands till they came to the most variable rung, grasp it, and pull.

A fortnight after their first meeting, all was ready for the journey of exploration they intended to make. They donned their masks with eager haste. Quickly they strapped on harnesses containing a fortnight's supply of food, and the oxygen masks. They attached leaden weights to their feet in order to counteract the effect of the small amount of gravitation they had discovered in the new world.

Farling at last stood by the ladder.

"Are you ready?" he breathed.

Klington nodded, too excited for words. For a moment, Farling fumbled about with invisible hands for the invisible rung. He gave a tug, and silently vanished.

After an instant of hesitation, Klington followed.

CHAPTER II

Wired New World

THE first sensation Klington experienced was the change of direction in the pull of his weight, through an angle of thirty degrees, and an immediate drop in temperature. As he clambered down, the ladder was swaying with the descent of Farling below him. Klington suddenly appreciated the thick coat he had brought with him.

Rung by rung he lowered toward a land never trodden before by human feet. The chlorine gas present in the atmosphere, though not dense enough to prevent distant vision, gave everything an unearthly green tinge. The tops of the forest of black stumps came into sight. He observed that the tip of each stem branched off into short, pointed spires.

A few more rungs, and with a thrill of anticipation, Klington stepped from the ladder to the ground. Vision was remarkably clear except for the upper heavens, which were blotted out completely by clouds of green.

The widely separated black growths offered almost no obstruction to his view. The ground was pitted with straight, deep runs, varying in width from eight to ten feet, and leading in every direction. Where two runs ran together, there occurred a circular pit. Klington could not judge the depth of the pits because of the fog thickness of the air.

Some indefinable quality of strangeness about the landscape seemed to be just ahead of his descent. Something was pending

him, and he could not locate it, for it was entirely different from anything he had previously experienced. His confused mind groped as if in blindness. He turned to express his bewilderment to Farling, and found him closely examining the nearest black hole.

Its texture was smooth and glossy, its width a mere inch, surprisingly thin for such a length. Every few seconds it quivered gently. Was it a plant growth? If so, it had no botanical counterpart.

Cautiously Farling put out his hand and felt the waxy surface. With a cry of fright he retracted suddenly, but it was too late. The thing gave a swift tremor and lashed about with irresistible violence. Farling was instantly flung off his feet and landed over the edge of a circular fissure behind him.

Klington rushed to the hole and peered. He saw nothing, but heard a curious sithering sound—and a despairing wail.

"Quick, Klington! I'm on some kind of slippery ledge. I can't hold on much longer!"

His ladder was a hundred feet long, in case the new world they had entered moved away relative to Earth. With great presence of mind, Klington dropped the loose end into the pit. He held it firm while Farling clambered up. The scientist had not been injured.

"How? What kind of place is that?" Farling gasped. "Was that a reflex action? Wait here a minute. That darkness has reminded me."

FARLING climbed up the ladder, and vanished into the world of their birth.

Despite all of Klington's philosophy, he could not forbear a twinge of uneasiness as he waited alone in this world of unknown perils. Suppose Farling, prompted by their former antagonism, pulled the ladder back into the hanglow, leaving Klington stranded.

But Farling's immediate return put his thoughts to shame. The scientist reappeared with two electric torches.

"Might as well," Farling remarked shortly. "Should have thought of them in the first place."

Now they felt ready to begin a tour of exploration. But before they left, Farling attached a large white sheet to the top portion of the ladder, to serve as a guide on their return journey. From a point half-way up the ladder, the surrounding land was surveyed to determine which direction they should take.

"Notice anything peculiar about the horizon?" asked Farling.

That was what had been puzzling Klington. There was no horizon! The dazzling plain, on which they were situated, moved upward in front, behind, and on the right, in a great concave pressure never ended. It continued on and on, expanding higher. Hundreds of miles away it was finally lost to view in the green mists of the sky. Only on the extreme left was there a short semblance of a horizon, where a definite edge could be seen.

This certainly was no ordinary planet they were visiting. There was no sun in the heavens. But a brilliant glow on the left lit up everything clearly. It seemed to proclaim the presence of some other body below the level horizon.

Farling discerned a mighty chain of mountains on the right. For some reason, it had the appearance of hanging over their heads, and was about fifty miles away as near as could be judged. Toward these mountains they finally decided to make their way.

With their rifles and a plentiful supply of ammunition, they set off. Walking was by no means difficult. The heights were easily cleared at a step for the leaden weights were insufficient to make up for the entire gravitational defect.

They covered about twelve miles without a single mishap or an encounter with any inhabitants of this desolate region. Then they called a halt for a meal.

The gas masks Farling and Klington wore were quite different from the type used in the first World War. They permitted free movement of the mouth and could be adjusted in a moment.

AFTER a slight meal, the march was resumed. Within an hour they emerged from the forest of black holes and found themselves on a gently sloping plain. Entirely free of fissures and of a rough border, though not easily traversed, it led directly toward the foot of the mountains.

The chain of crags so far surpassed any earthly heights that they were tremendously awe-inspiring. Composed of a dazzling, smooth, white material, they rose sheer, absolutely vertical, from the plain to a height of at least twelve miles.

The puny Terrastrials were confounded by the breath-taking revelation. Consternation, dismay, terror, admiration, seized them in turn as they gazed upon the magnificence of those sharp white peaks crowned in green mist. In perfect order they stood, all in a straight line, all of similar shape. Like a line of guards, they seemed to be shielding the mysteries of the land beyond.

As broad as the top as they were at the bottom, many overlapped or were in actual contact in parts. At noon, only a narrow crevice separated them. Each peak was of a uniform width of four or five miles. Measured in the direction in which the travelers were going, they appeared to be exceedingly thin for their height.

Farling and Klington pushed rapidly across the plain. They were hearing with curiosity to discover the secret of those colossal crags. What kind of world was this, in which Nature was so lavish and so regular?

Such was the alightness of gravity that by the time Klington's watch indicated that Cairo was in darkness, they were only a mile from the nearest peak. Speechless with astonishment at the close view of the monolithic mass, and weary with exhaustion, they crawled on the plain. Quickly they prepared for sleep. All this time the brilliancy of the illumination had neither diminished nor increased.

Farling was suddenly awakened by a blinding whisp from Klington.

"Pardig! Lie still and tell me what you hear!"

A moment of utter silence followed before Farling whinniped back.

"Not the slightest sound."

"Put your ear on the ground, then."

"Yes! I hear a most shattering sound!"

There could be no doubt about it. Every thirty seconds a distinct booming noise was heard. Was it imagination, or did the ground actually rise and fall gently at each bound? Did this portend the approach of some unknown danger?

Hardly had they fallen asleep again when Farling was awoken by a peculiar vibration on his knee. He opened his eyes and started up in horror, unable to thrust a warning to Klington. The vocal cords were momentarily paralyzed.

He gazed at an incredible nightmare monster, ten yards long and with two spiny legs on each side. Its head was set on a long, thin, arched neck. Warily it was looking its head with a set of antennae that branched from the place where its nose should have been!

EDARLING stumbled over Klington, himself starting awakening him. Grabbing his rifle, he fired haphazardly. The Syrian beast immediately turned and galloped with tremendous velocity toward a narrow between two mountains. It vanished.

The two men stared wildly for a full minute before recovering their wits. Then Klington spoke shakily.

"Well, that's the first example of Other-world animal life we've had. If the rest are like that, we won't have to drag out our visit too long!"

From then on, one watched while the other slept. They registered the lack of food, for the cold seemed more intense when lying still.

At six a. m., Cairo time, they prepared to set off once more. Farling stood up and faced Klington.

"We have a choice before us. We can either return at once to the ladder or continue to the other side of the barrier through the crevice. We don't know what dangers we will meet there. For myself, I am anxious to find out what has hidden that white wall. But the object of our expedition is accomplished. You are thoroughly convinced of the truth of my theory. So I am quite willing to renounce our steps if you do not care to proceed."

Klington's answer was brief and calmly to the point.

"I move that we push on at once."

That ended the question. A few minutes later they stood at the foot of the nearest mountain, examining with great wonder the smooth, polished surface. The wildest imaginations failed their brains as they surveyed the colossal structure.

"Surely that must be artificial," said Farling in an awed tone, as Klington tested its hardness by kicking it.

"An artificial barrier over ten miles high is incredible," retorted Klington.

"Nevertheless we have seen many fearful things in the last few hours. My opinion is that on the other side we shall find the builders of this wall. Think what a tremendous degree of civilization they must possess for their engineers to construct such a huge barrier!"

Before he could theorize further, the two were fighting for their lives. A horde of creatures, similar to the one they had previously seen, were rushing down upon them from the mountain pass. It was useless to flee. The monsters galloped along at more than two hundred miles an hour.

Despair gripped the hearts of the Terrastoids as they fired into the midst of the advancing mass. As if by magic, the levithians instantly dispersed to all sides and sought shelter. Apparently it was the sound of the explosions that they could not withstand.

FREQUENTLY in their journey through the pass the travelers were attacked by the horrible legions of the megapiles. But none ever failed to lighten all the look-alike beasts.

The way through the pass was rough and difficult. Often Farling and Klinton could barely scrape through between the two smooth walls. The path, moreover, was steep. It rose to an elevation of several hundred feet about halfway and descended as steeply on the other side.

If it had not been for the advantage of lunar gravity, they could never have performed the feat. As it was, over five hours were required to plance through to the other side. The latter portion of the journey was beset with dangers, owing to the increasing steepness and crookedness of the road.

At last their arduous struggle was rewarded. They safely maneuvered a tenuous path, wedged themselves through a narrow cleft. Abruptly they came in sight of the concealed domain behind the barrier.

The most striking thing about the new territory was the fact that every object in it, except the glistening white cliffs behind, was red. A great red plain stretched before the daring Terrastoids. Traversed by numerous folds, it was covered with a low, red, bushy vegetation. In the plants swarmed myriad forms of almost microscopic life, something like *monads* (microbes) all told.

Each step they took, a squabbling mass and a red viscous ooze oozed in slow trickles from beneath the vegetation. Several miles away from the cliffs the land appeared to be in deep darkness.

Of Farling's unexpected mighty civilization and great engineers, there was, to his keen disappointment, not a single sign. He still hoped, however, that they might live underground. How else could they explain the regular beeping sound they had heard on the gray plain? Apparently it was coming from the bowels of the earth.

While Farling was pondering the problem, Klinton suddenly grew alarmed. Holding his binoculars, he stared intently through them at the green sky.

"Farling, look straight up," he said tensely. "There's a vast white thing falling through

the green clouds! It frightens me."

Farling, extremely startled, looked up again. Were his senses playing him tricks? Had his aged given way under the strain of the recently unaccustomed happenings? If so, how was it that Klinton's vision was the same as his?

He made out a line of huge white cliffs hanging inverted to the sky, at least fifty miles away. Rapidly they were falling straight toward the other cliffs below, which they so greatly resembled.

Farling was also conscious that the phenomenon, which until now had remained steady, was gradually falling. What could this new development mean?

Were they to be plunged into darkness and crushed helplessly beneath countless tons of rock? Where was the rock falling from?

A sudden fantastic thought entered his tortured mind. It was almost too ludicrous for utterance.

"Klinton," gasped Farling, asking him fiercely by the arm and pointing upward with the finger of a madman. "Is it as if—as if a colossal mirror were falling above our heads. What we are seeing is the reflection of the white ranges we have just passed through?"

CHAPTER III

Explosion

INDEED, Klinton readily imagined that it was the reflection of the other, as alike were they in every visible detail. All at once he sprang to life.

"Come," he said, and turned Farling round. "We have no time to lose. If the apparition is really falling from an immense height, it will take over an hour to reach the ground. We require five hours to return the way. Going back the same way is foolhardy. The only way that lies open to us is directly across this red plain away from the mountains. That's our only hope of escape. We must get as far as possible from here before the catastrophe occurs! Come!"

Swiftly they dispensed with some of their heaviest weights and began to spring across the red cane in mighty fifty-yard leaps. The soaring utter impendence of what they had witnessed had staggered their minds. All logical, connected thinking ceased. A dull apathy settled upon them, and only the remote corners of their brains kept their leg muscles in feverish activity.

Quicker they progressed in agonizing strides. They did not even dare stop for breath, but ate as they ran.

They did not speak. Only unpleasant, squabbling sounds broke the silence. They reserved all their breath for running. Ever the light continued to fade, ever they approached the dark shadows of the farther side of the plain. But what was the use of their flight? Such a mass, crashing down from the skies, would shake the whole planet to its very foundations.

But anything was better than inactivity.

To stand still and watch that awful doom approaching would have been torturing madness. Often Kington and Parling wondered if they were not already insane, undergoing delirious visions of an opium dream.

Suddenly they were both hung on their heads by a frightful cracking noise interspersed with earthquake peals of thunder, as if their were smashing the ground in two with his mighty hammer. They were unable to do anything but cling to the vegetation and stare at the monstrosity in the heavens. The roar now was accompanied by a terrific blast of hot air that swept over them. Had the falling rock at last reached the ground?

They gaped in amazement. The white mountains only half a mile from the nearest peaks were no longer ascending. They were actually sliding down! Their speed now was reduced to no more than a few feet a second.

Then where had the roaring and the wind come from? The last vestige of reality left the scene. The lone human beings stared about with frightened eyes and failed to perceive the origin of the dreadful tumult. Faintly they saw a vague mass far away to the left. Shadowy outlines above in the skies indicated something huge like a canopy, as if supporting the suspended rocks.

The light, now reduced to a mere dim twilight, gave them no cheer. They had been saved for the moment by a miracle so incredible that their bewilderment had not as yet even realized the situation.

As suddenly as it had begun, the darknessing dim ceased. But the warm blast continued blowing without respite, and left the world once more a wilderness of silence. The men staggered to their feet and gaped around.

They were just within the region of dense shadow they had perceived before. Seeing that all impossible danger was apparently over, they decided to regenerate their fatigued bodies with sleep and food.

Parling was the first to awake. While his fellow-voyager slept on, he occupied himself in throwing away an empty oxygen tank and replacing it with a full one.

Kington was aroused from his deep sleep by a light touch on his shoulder. He opened his eyes, stared upward at Parling, and groaned interrogatively. Parling had unconsciously assumed the odd hunched attitude. Legs stiffly apart like a statue, his outstretched arms pointed over Kington in the direction of the white mountains.

"Look," he whispered.

Kington got up and turned around. The two simply stood and watched, absolutely incapable of further wonderment, while the new danger rapidly advanced.

A wall of some liquid, apparently water, rushed at least a mile high. It was so long that it stretched out of sight on either hand. And it came bearing down upon them with the velocity of a tidal wave. With one accord they turned and fled into the darkness.

They found themselves going sleepily downhill. It became so black that they had to use their torches. The artificial light saved them from countless mishaps as they

sped through the gloom in gigantic leaps. Their velocity was now almost equal to that of the oncoming wave. But how long would it be before they tried and their doom overtook them?

They were now gradually falling down the precipitous grade, and making good progress. But while the slope no longer aided them, it also speeded the water toward them. The swelling and roaring of its passage had just become audible when the ground suddenly smoothed out to a gentler slope.

Gaining for breath, they paced on side by side. When one stumbled, the other fell back to help him up. After dozens of weary miles were covered in this manner, their overworked muscles loved them to slow down. Not so the water, however, which incessantly swept up. The flood could no longer be seen, owing to the dense blackness. But their progress was easily judged by the increasing noise they made. Daily Kington and Parling realized that their adventure was at an end. Their story would never reach the world.

Suddenly Kington had an inspiration.

"Parling," he called almost incoherently, "Turn up the oxygen thoracic air the way!"

NO longer had they done so when he sensed life flowing through their veins. They felt rejuvenated, invigorated. Once more they struggled onward. But the roar of the waters was always present in their ears, like monstrous grasshoppers advancing inexorably.

The respite was brief, however. For a time it worked well, but the extra draw of the life-giving fluid used up their energy at an enormously increased rate. After a short interval of asphyxiant anxiety, they fell to the ground, utterly exhausted.

Nothing now could possibly save them. They lay groaning in the sodden vegetation, waiting hopefully for the end. Gradually they grew aware of that regular booming sound emerging from the bowels of the earth. They had noticed before, but now its volume was greatly increased.

Already the mighty swell of waters was upon them. All wild hopes for help from the organizers of the mysterious boating were squelched in the lasting fury of the wave. Up, up, it swept them right to the top of its lofty crest.

Kington, feebly trying to float on the sensitive upper surface, felt himself borne along irresistibly. His torch was still firmly grasped in his hand, as the drowning man is supposed to clutch the straw. The ray momentarily fell upon Parling, a few feet away.

Kington could hardly credit his senses. Surely the weird effect of the solitary gloom plying about in a sea of darkness, combined with the fatigue of his travels, was deluding him. With an effort he swung the torch around until it again illuminated Parling. It was impossible! It couldn't be! Ordinary human beings could never perform the miracle of the Bible.

But that was exactly what the scientist was doing. Parling, who appeared quite as

started as himself, was actually walking on the water! Kingston's blood ran cold as he turned his attention to himself. He realized that so far he had not yet been submerged. In fact he was merely lying on the surface as naturally as one lies on a couch. He stood up and began to walk toward Farling.

Imagine the amazement of that incredible meeting! These two, who had never expected to see each other again in the flesh, had once more been saved in a miraculous fashion.

They walked to each other, shook hands, and gazed in delighted astonishment! Then they noticed that the water gave way a little under their feet, but that the surface was yet even higher. It was as if a tight, impenetrable skin was stretched over the entire meeting liquid.

It was comparatively quiet up here, so far above the noisy tumult where the water came in contact with the ground. Conversation was unobstructed. The lighting of a great idea had come to Farling when first the wave swept him up in its embrace. Now he became wildly excited. He whooped with joy and slapped Kingston on the shoulder. The philosopher fell flat, for it was a difficult task to keep one's feet on the smooth skin surface.

"I have it! I have it!" Farling cried, in tones suggestive of a man who has suddenly solved an almost insoluble problem.

"Have what?" demanded Kingston, unmoved at his companion's unaccountable exuberance.

Farling calmed down somewhat, then spoke grandly once more.

"With all your philosophy, you have no doubt been unable to see the explanation of all the mysterious occurrences which we have recently undergone."

Kingston asserted bewilderedly.

"Kingston, it must be due to bad training in your youth. Your philosopher-masters have told you that everything is relative, and you believed them. But such is your mind that you are unable to apply it even in simple cases. Kingston, it requires the mind of a mathematician to do that. My explanation, at once elementary and logical, embraces everything from the black forest to the food which now carries us along! If it is true, it indicates another danger ahead, far more terrible than the ones we have yet experienced."

Farling stopped for a moment and peered into the gloom ahead.

Before he could say another word, before the drowsed Kingston could utter a single question, the surface of the water tilted. It assumed an angle so steep that it was no longer possible to remain upright. Kingston and Farling instantly sprawled on their backs and began sliding down to a late this was, at least to Kingston, unknown.

They had no time to remark upon this frightful disaster. It was so much as they could do to keep their feet foremost. But striking was not yet to be theirs.

The water swept round a gradual curve to the left, ever deepening. But the Terrestrial, when they were not actually immersed

in the fluid, did not partake of its friction. They continued on in a straight line, owing to their own inertia, in the direction of the tangent. They were crushed with staggering force against a rocky rough mass, the first elevated land they had encountered since leaving the abyssal mountains. It jolted up out of the water to a considerable height.

With the merry barn of despair they clung with all their strength to the slight projections the island afforded. Kingston with great difficulty managed to grab a narrow ledge and cling up. But in the process he dropped his flashlight, which was instantly swept away to the current.

Farling's sigh, however, indicated his precarious position. The above suggestion had obtained a grip on the ledge but could not pull himself up. Kingston eagerly made his way along the ledge. He bent over and removed the torch from Farling's grasp. Placing it in a crevice so it shone upon Farling, Kingston hauled him out.

A few feet farther on, the ledge abruptly terminated. They were obliged to walk along it in the other direction. Now he had they progressed when they were forced to stop. An impassable wall blocked the way. They stood helplessly flapping the torch around. Yet there was still a hope. The beam revealed no passage round the obstruction, but about twelve feet above their heads the ledge seemed to continue.

Kingston, the lighter of the two, climbed upon Farling's shoulders. He was barely able to reach the upper ledge. Once he did, though, it was an easy matter to help Farling up the rock-face. The new ledge sloped steeply upward, and the slipperiness and narrowness of the path made it extremely difficult to walk.

For an eternity they plodded onward in silence. They heard nothing but a disconcerting purring sound that became louder and louder as they ascended.

The path took a steep turn to the left, following the contour of the island. The travelers, weary and hungry, loosed themselves on a wide platform surrounded by rock on three sides and blank space on the other.

Kingston and Farling shuddered with horror. A flash of the light revealed a ghastly pit of immeasurable depth into which the water plunged in a vast whirlpool. That was the origin of the gurgling noise. If not for the timely intervention of the island, they would now be lost in those depths.

The scientist nodded.

"Just as I thought!" said Farling, gazing into the abyss.

CHAPTER IV

Revelation

WHEN the Terrestrial had made themselves as comfortable as possible on the rock-bound square and partaken of food, they slept for some six hours. Farling refused to say a word until he had rested. As for Kingston, his mind was in a whirl at the

anticipated explanation that Parling had blazed at.

"Oh, Parling really have the solution to all the peculiar phenomena they had seen? How could he explain the lack of horizon, the sensitive black holes, the interfering regular farrows, the unchanging diamagnetism? But the abrupt and orderly white mountains, the hidden dangers of the pass, the strange underground heating, were inconceivable to Klington. Longingly he waited an explanation of the plain where everything was red, the falling rocks which never reached the ground, and finally this turbulent sea that had sprung from nowhere.

But were the hints Parling had thrown out merely the gibberings of a madman?

When Klington awoke, he was agreeably surprised to find that the flashlight was now unnecessary. The natural illumination, though faint, was good enough to enable him to perceive nearby objects. He aroused Parling.

After they had eaten, he immediately demanded the explanation at which the scientist had hinted.

"It is really very simple," said Parling. "In fact, it is almost obvious, at least to a discerning intellect like mine."

KLINGTON was much too interested to let Parling go, and Parling went on.

"The key to the mystery lies in this. We are not on a planet at all!"

An exclamation burst from Klington. Parling rose and stood on the edge, his back to the gold, in his favorite position of the Rhodian Colonies. He was the triumphant man now.

"No," he said dramatically. "We are not upon a planet—but on the ship of a moon-struck, gargantuan animal! Is it not obvious? We landed on the lip of the beast. These sensitive organs no doubt were analogous to earthly hair or claws. We traveled to one side of the lip. There was no horizon almost on every side because we were on the slope nearest the mouth. The ground curved upward all around until it was out of sight. You can understand that, at least.

"The mountains we encountered, Klington, were indigestible teeth! And I suppose the large, evil-doing organisms we met there can be likened to the bacteria in our own teeth, which cause decay if not removed by tooth-paste. Well, we journeyed between two of the teeth of the monster, and thus entered its mouth. Time and space both seem to be greater in this universe than in ours, for the heart-beats we heard were quite slow.

"The similarity between the creature and humanity is so great that the interior of its mouth is red, as we saw. The sea that swept us here is, of course, merely saliva. The cracking sound we heard during the gale must have been some 30-ton monster yawning at the other end of his mouth! We shall soon see it."

"But how do you explain the miracle of walking on the water?" interposed Klington curiously.

"I don't quite understand that," said Parling slowly, as if unwilling to divulge any flow in his theory.

THEY left silent for a moment, Klington was reflecting deeply. Suddenly his face lit up.

"I've got it!" he cried. "It's quite obvious, and it's a strong corroboration of your idea."

It was now Parling's turn to be confused. "Indeed?" he said.

"Yes," said Klington. "It was due to surface tension. Haven't you ever seen a pin-point photograph of a fly crawling on the surface of a stream? Surface tension, common to all fluids, gives the appearance of a light elastic skin stretched over the water—and the effect we observed. Compared with this South-Islandian animal, we are much less than any insect. The phenomenon is not due to the large volume of liquid present—or else no boat on an ocean could ever sink on our Earth. But the molecules themselves composing the skins are correspondingly bigger than earthly molecules."

Parling was pleased at this support of his theory.

"The philosopher's mind," he said, "can lead us to fresh facts, even the mathematician has shown the way. The apparently falling rocks which caused us to depart in such a hurry, as I suppose you have guessed by now, were none other than the upper teeth of the monster."

Parling turned around and pointed to the tremendous hole below him.

"And this, Klington, is undoubtedly the greatest threat. Think of it, man, think of it! It must be at least five hundred miles deep."

Swift and sure, on the heels of this statement, came death. The island which had stood there in such good stead, gave a sudden spasmodic twitch, as if recoiling at the thought of those prosaic mortal coils from another world.

With a terrible, despairing cry, Parling, who had been standing on the very edge, toppled over. His hands were madly clutching at empty space. He vanished into the boiling madstrom!

Klington was flung against the hard side wall and knocked unconscious by the vicious shock.

When his senses revived, the light was as bright as day. No doubt the monster was again opening its mouth. For several minutes he lay dully, while slow realization came to him.

He had suffered the loss of his companion. He was now absolutely alone in a strange world, imprisoned in the jaws of a nightmare animal.

How long he remained there he had no means of telling, for his watch had been stopped by the impact. Many times the island was shaken by spasms, but none so violent as the first. He kept as near to the inner wall as possible, in fear of sharing the ghastly fate of Parling.

Then came the dread moment when he fitted the last oxygen cylinder to the breathing tube, and still the waters had not subsided. He remembered Parling's harpoon, which lay where the scientist had had his last sleep.

To his joy it contained a plentiful supply of oxygen tanks.

As that instant the loud roaring of the waters ceased. He went to the brink and looked over. The whirlpool was now reduced to a mere trickle. It was necessary to go at once before a second deluge appeared.

Klington fastened his harness, replenishing his diminished supplies with those of Pauling. Climbing down the narrow ledge, he jumped to the floor of the mouth. He had gone but half a mile up the slope toward the white barrier, far away in the distance, when a fresh sorcerer greeted him. The ground curved upward much steeper than he had observed before. It reached a height of several miles, and ran flat until it encountered the top of the white mountains.

He could not imagine what had occurred. Then it came to him in a flash.

The monster had merely raised its tongue, the tip of which was now resting on its teeth!

It was no good thinking to the top of the teeth, so he made a detour to the left. In that direction, he thought, lay the nearest edge of the tongue.

After a journey of many miles, he came at last to the edge. He clambered down the rough side, and stood upon the mouth floor.

It was moving so quickly that he could just follow its motion. It was almost halfway between its former site and the nearest tooth. A faint hope surged in his breast. It was his only chance for life, for even the last of the oxygen would be utilized.

If the motion continued in that direction, the ladder would shortly be close to the peak of the tooth. Instantly, for no time was to be lost, he flung away much of his provisions and all the lumber weights. Retaining only the remaining spherules, he returned through the gap in huge leaps.

WITHOUT a pause he trotted alongside the tongue, until it was near enough to the ground to make the ascent practicable. Without daring to delay for breath, he climbed up the steep, difficult slope of the lower portion of the tongue. Eventually he arrived at the distal upper portion.

Here the going was much facilitated, but he did not relax his efforts. By exerting his willpower to the utmost, he forced his tired limbs toward the tip of the tongue.

While down at the pass below, he had noted the tooth toward which the ladder was moving. He had counted the number of

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He continued along the five-mile-wide channel between the clank and the tongue until he came to the teeth.

In the pass between two of them, he encountered the usual waterborne creature. At last he stood on the clean plain which alone separated him from the one link with Earth.

Klington raised a powerful pair of pneumatic binoculars to his eyes. He scanned the forest of black stems for the white spot which indicated the position of the ladder. It was nowhere to be seen!

For half an hour he searched, while a cold hand tightened its grip on his heart.

To his great surprise, his attention was attracted upward. With an unpleasant jolt, he perceived that some chance movement of the monster he had explored had raised the ladder to ascend to a height of five miles. It was much nearer than before. He could even make out the end of the red bands the rope ladder and the sheet. What a terrible predicament he was in! Hope seemed lost as he gazed with hungry eyes at the previous connection to his world.

teeth that lay between it and the end of the row. With this to guide him, he burned on. Hunger now was added to his fatigue.

Within five hundred yards of the tip, he paused and flung himself prostrate with a cry of despair. The tongue had been slowly contracting and arching upward. Now the tip was a good eight hundred yards from the opposite peak! As if in mockery, the ladder dangled above the tooth, just within reach of a vertical jump! But by the time it passed over the tongue, it would be too high! Klington stood erect with sudden realization. There was only one thing to do.

Calling away his harness, he ran to the very tip. He flung himself heady through the air in a mighty attempt to span the gap.

The feat was by no means impossible. But there was a large element of risk for a man in Klington's weakened state, despite the slight gravity. Up he rose to the top of the parabola, and then began to fall with a steadily slow acceleration. His mind reeled at the thought of the terrible fall twelve miles below him, but he determined not to look downward.

Presently his heart froze with horror. He realized that he could never attain the opposite side. His weary hands had killed him at the last! He would fall short by about three yards! A small distance, but as good as infinity in his present condition.

He had but three seconds in which to consider the position before he passed below the level of the opposing bank. His subconscious mind, unknown to himself, was working with lightning rapidity.

Suddenly there flashed into his conscious mind two facts he had learned when a schoolboy. Projections have the maximum range when they leave the mouth of the gun at an angle of forty-five degrees to the horizontal, was the first. The second was the principle of the rocket-orientation.

The heaviest object he had, which could be detached in a moment, was the single remaining oxygen cylinder. It was heavy because it was nearly full of liquid oxygen. Hastily he unlatched it and heaved it with all his strength, forty-five degrees downward, away from the crest of the tooth.

THE impetus was not great, for his mass was much more than that of the cylinder. But, owing again to the slight gravity, it was enough.

Klingston's straining fingers were brought just within reach of the edge. He swung himself on the flat surface.

Staggering on his feet, he looked upward for the ladder, and jumped. The lack of oxygen was already taking. He fell to the south. His lungs were clamoring for the food.

He gathered himself together and leaped again.

Everything was getting black. He couldn't have jumped far. He could never reach it.

His hand grasped the lowest rung! He was saved!

Slowly, wearily, gasping for breath, Klingston painfully managed to drag his body up the ladder.

He staggered into the kindly world of rest.

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Thrills in SCIENCE

Thumbnail Sketches of Great Men and Achievements

By MORT WEISBERG

THE MYSTERY MAN OF SCIENCE



ORFYREUS, the Saxon, pointed to the huge spinning wheel at his left. "Behold, gentlemen," he told the distinguished audience before him, "my masterpiece!"

The group of silent visitors stared bewilderedly at the metal wheel, six feet in diameter, which kept rotating on a fastened axle at a speed of about fifty revolutions per minute.

Orfyreus paced up and down the room, nervous, his eyes aglaze with excitement.

"Observe, gentlemen," he went on. "My wheel spins regularly, evenly. It has been spinning so for the past five minutes. It will continue so for the next hour, the next day, the next year—for all eternity!"

One of the group of observers in Orfyreus' simple laboratory, bolder than the rest, walked over to the mysteriously spinning wheel. He inspected its gears, its supports. Finally he shook his head in wonderment.

"I am puzzled," he announced to the others. "As to me in my name is Sir Isaac New-

ton, a native of Essex, Saxony, telling the world that he had accomplished the impossible!"

"We can't believe our eyes," declared a noted scientist in the room, next along with the others to examine the alleged wonders of Orfyreus' wheel. "To the magic of a charlatan!" He turned to the others. "This man is no scientist. He is a trickster, one who would dupe us. Have we seen the inner workings of his wheel? Perhaps the power that turns the wheel is hidden down in. Perpetual motion is impossible. Nothing goes on forever. The longest river dries up. Yea, even the Sun will some day be a dead, lightless sphere!"

Orfyreus answered calmly, striving to control his temper.

"When a fool cannot understand the workings of the wise, he makes ridicule. Well, mock me. But my wheel turns, by a power all its own. And it will be turning long after you have been buried in your grave, and worms have eaten you!"

Sir Isaac Newton, the most brilliant scientist of the day, interrupted:

"Tell me, Orfyreus," he said, "how functions your device? How do you account for the law of conservation of energy? The energy given by the revolving of your wheel is converted into heat by friction. Why does not this friction stop your wheel?"

"That is my secret," stressed the unknown inventor. "I have made my claims. Here is a wheel that spins before your eyes. The wheel does not touch the ground. It is supported by an axle suspended by a rod from the ceiling. It requires no external aid. It has been spinning for half an hour already. . . it will continue to spin for centuries. If your science cannot explain my feat, that is not my concern."

"The designs!" reminded the notable who



Sir Isaac Newton

ton I would have declared such a miraculous device impossible. Yet here it is, before my very eyes, a mechanical invention that whirls about of its own volition. What strange power makes your wheel spin so, Orfyreus?"

"It is as I have told the architect to the Emperor of Austria," Orfyreus said emphatically. "I have harnessed the powers of perpetual motion!"

Perpetual motion! Even in the year 1712 the quest for this Holy Grail of science seemed as impossible as the finding of the alchemist's stone, or the attainment of the elixir of life. And now here was this man

had hatched Orfyreus before. "What of them? Touch the acid. Show us! There lies your secret!" A glowing gleam lit up the notable's eyes. "A spring is sealed thereon. That's all—It seeps two pounds a day, cooled spring deposits your wheel!"

Orfyreus picked up an iron hammer from his workbench. He strode over to the rotating, parring wheel. With one swift blow he shattered the metal casing surrounding the hub of the wheel. The casing fell to the floor in fragments, exposing—nothing. The wheel turned on, speeding in its eternal cycle.

Dr Isaac Newton shook his head. Like others before him who had come to study the curious device, he was baffled. Orfyreus' model of a perpetual motion machine defied all known laws of science. Yet it did exist. That was the devil of it. One could argue until he was blue in the face that it was impossible. But there it was, a cold fact. How can you argue against facts?

"He is a knave, a swindler!" cried the members of the scientific committee in the room. "He has bartered with the devil; the machine is Satan's own magic. No right-eous mortal man could touch the forces of eternity!"

And so it went for poor Orfyreus. Disputations came to crown his invention, not to accept it. Because they couldn't understand,

he was a faker. Many men had tested his machine; his claims were always upheld. Yet they went away in disbelief. Science was not believing. Even Dr Isaac Newton was unconvinced, although he had been impressed.

Orfyreus picked up his hammer. The rage that he had been trying to suppress all during the interview finally gave vent. He went over to his spinning wheel, smashed at the hub, roused strokes after strokes at the whole apparatus until the machine had stopped, became a shattered, jagged heap of useless metal. Orfyreus had destroyed the first wheel to illuminate the miracle of perpetual motion.

Whatever Orfyreus' secret was, it died with the inventor, who smashed his model in fury as a protest against the bigoted skepticism of his critics. Science has not committed itself as to a verdict regarding this strange fact. Perhaps, they suggest, it was done through the power of magnetism, something Orfyreus might have discovered unknown to the others. And, if we feel inclined to scoff, science warns us, "Let us remember that the 'impossibility' of one age are eventually the proved certainties of another!"

Did Orfyreus really solve the secret of perpetual motion? No one will ever know. That will be time's perpetual secret!

THE UNFINISHED EXPERIMENT

ANTOINE LAURENT LAVOISIER smiled wanly. It was strange, the way he felt. Any other person in his place would be trembling, terrified. Yet he felt extremely at ease. He was calm, at peace with the world. Only one strong emotion flooded his being—curiosity. A thousand doubts of curiosity pitchforked at his inner mind. They had been growing away at his soul for days, and there was nothing he could do about it.

It was tough, Lavoisier told himself. continue his experiment, he would have been haunting him. But, now he would was upsetting the chemical balance. For

It was all so weird, so unbelievable. A month ago he had been happily at work in his laboratory, one of the most brilliant chemists in France. Leading scientific associations showered him with honors. Famous scientists submitted papers to him, begging his criticism. And now—death was but minutes off.

Well, he didn't mind dying. Everyone had to die at some time or another. But he would like to have written "Fide" to his last experiment. Lavoisier shut his eyes, but his memory didn't let him rest one month. He had been working in his laboratory with Laplace, his associate. He remembered. . . .

Antoine Lavoisier regarded the man sitting on a chair in the laboratory. The man was horizontally sectioned in a vanished black silk bag, a bag rendered absolutely straight except for a narrow slit to enable breathing.

Lavoisier laughed aloud.

"You certainly look funny, Laplace," he said jovially. "You'd win first prize at a masquerade in your costume. Everyone would think you were an executioner."

Laplace, the black silk cloak clanking his frame, rapped through the small orifice that had been cut away near his mouth:

"Hurry up with the experiment, Antoine. I feel warm inside this coffin."

"Well, keep your mouth shut, then," Lavoisier told his assistant. Savoring so, the assistant carefully concealed the edges of the slit in the top of the silk bag around the man's mouth with a mixture of pitch and turpentine.

"Voilà!" he exclaimed as he finished. "Now we are ready. You see, man, now, everything sealed by your body will now be contained in the silk bag. It cannot escape. . . the bag is airtight. The only air that will escape from your body is that which is expelled from your lungs while you breathe. You will breathe the trapped air into several bottles. Later, I will analyze their contents. Whatever escapes from your body in the way of perspiration will remain sealed in the coffin covering."

Lavoisier hummed softly to himself as he went about preparing for this experiment.

He was investigating, for the first time, the processes of inspiration and perspiration of the human body.

Lavoisier felt very satisfied with himself. This was to be one of the most accurate experiments he had ever performed. The weight of oxygen, the silk bag, the inhaled air, and the expired air, and decompositions of the gas in weight of the bag and loss in weight of his apparatus, were made on the most sensitive balances in all the world. His instruments would guarantee perfect results.

But Antoine Lavoisier, who, by his remarkable contributions to the field of chemistry, had laid the cornerstone of that science, was destined never to read the results of this experiment. The man who had established the law of the conservation of mass, the man who had given chemistry a rational nomenclature, was suddenly interrupted in the middle of his experiment. The door of his laboratory burst open, and a noisy squad of soldiers rushed in.

One of the men strode over to the seated Berthollet, ripped the silk off his body. Another man, a policeman, another individual, obviously the leader, strode over to the bearded scientist and read from a document:

"I, Marat, member of the National Assembly and Friend of the People, charge you with treason against the people of France. On the night of July Twelfth, you, Antoine Lavoisier, aided in the manufacturing of gunpowder from the Arsenal to the Bastille. You will be judged by the Revolutionary Tribunal."

Suddenly, Lavoisier understood. This was Paris, 1794. The French Revolution was in full swing. The Reign of Terror, was ravaging the country, and thousands were being sent to their death. And Marat was finally obtaining his revenge.

For Marat and Lavoisier were enemies. Years before, when Marat had attempted to gain election to the Academy of Science, Lavoisier had exposed him as a very poor scientist. Evidently, Marat had never forgotten.

"Why should Lavoisier enjoy an income of forty thousand francs annually?" Marat had pointed out to the hypocritical underprivileged classes. "We don't need any scientists in the Republic."

Marat had used other persuasive arguments. He showed that Lavoisier had once been a tax-collector, that he was a former secretary to the King. Spurious charges were heaped one atop the other—and Lavoisier, immortal man of science, was accused.

Yes, Lavoisier understood now all too well the revenge Marat had sought. As the soldiers placed him under arrest and rushed

him toward the door, Lavoisier shook them off momentarily, stood still a moment. His eyes wandered around the laboratory . . . ranged from the sensitive balances to the various flasks and retorts. Something told him that he would never work with this apparatus again, never set foot in the laboratory . . . never complete his experiment.

Lavoisier was right. In May, 1794, in spite of petitions from many of his influen-



Antoine Laurent Lavoisier

tial friends, who reminded the Court of the greatness of this man of science, he was sentenced to death . . .

Lavoisier opened his eyes, to look into the masked eyes of the executioner. He smiled grimly. The black-and-white executioner did look like Marat, when he had been wearing the black silk bag.

The executioner nodded shortly. The great mask of frenzied spectators went quiet, out of respect for this great scientist. Bravely, head erect, Lavoisier walked over to the guillotine, placed his head under the blade.

A brief pause, then a roll of drums. The executioner released the blade, and the shimmering blade flashed down. The decapitated head of Lavoisier fell into the monstrous basket below the death-machine.

And below, in the audience, the eminent mathematician, Lagrange, shuddered. He turned to a companion and said softly:

"This is science's darkest moment. It took but a moment to cut off that head, though a hundred years perhaps will be required to produce another like it!"

Death had completed Lavoisier's experiment.

THE BIRTH OF AN ELEMENT

IF Professor Henri Becquerel had not placed a piece of uranium ore upon a sensitized photographic plate. . . . If Becquerel had not observed that certain changes occurred on that plate. . . . If you take away the thrilling moment when Becquerel made his startling observation—then you might just as well shove science back more than a decade!

Professor Becquerel was an average scientist. He liked his work, and he did it well.

He was an instructor at the Ecole Polytech-

signs, in Paris, and he was popular with his students and the faculty.

Becquerel had some ideas about science, particularly in regard to physics, which was his delight. He believed that every problem could be solved through the application of certain fundamental rules.

First, there was chance and effort. Everything that happened just didn't happen. It happened only because of something else, some motivating factor. If a scientist saw what happened, but couldn't explain why, that it was his task to provide the answer.

Secondly, Becquerel believed in the law of trial and error. To obtain the answer to a scientific riddle, you couldn't just pluck the solution out of thin air. You had to consider various theories, make many tests—thousands, if necessary. Trial and error. Miss, miss, until you scored a bullseye. That wasn't luck. That was pure scientific experimentation.

Now there was things in mind. For that was what Henri Becquerel wanted badly in an experiment one morning when he entered his laboratory and happened to glance at a photographic plate lying on a table in his darkroom.

The night before, Becquerel had been working with a sample of uranium ore.

"I want to find out whether phosphorescent substances, such as uranium, give off X-rays," he had told an assistant. Later in the day, when Becquerel had finished his experiments for the afternoon, he had placed the plate of uranium ore upon a sensitized photographic plate in his darkroom. The plate, oddly enough, was covered with black paper.

Now, asked you, Becquerel didn't place the ore on the plate by any design. He could just as easily have put it on a shelf, or inside a cabinet. He merely placed the ore on the plate because it was within reach. If he hadn't placed the ore there, this story would never have been written. And science would have lost one of its most amazing short-cuts to progress.

And now, the morning after, Becquerel picked up the uranium ore, ready to continue further experiments with it. His eyes bulged, then widened in disbelief as he lifted the ore. For the plate under the black paper had changed!

Becquerel called for his assistant.

"Look," he told him. "This plate has been changed, as though some light had hit it. How is this possible? This is a darkroom.

No light source here. What changed the plate? Tell me, is this a prank of yours?"

The assistant shook his head in disbelief.

"I don't know anything about this, Professor," he said. "I don't see how any light could have reached the plate."

Now, as we said before, Becquerel knew there must be a reason for every effect. This was a strange effect indeed, and he would not rest until he learned its cause.

So Becquerel tried the experiment again. He tried it a dozen more times. And it worked, in every case. Always the phenomenon was repeated. Under the uranium ore, through the black paper, the plate was always changed, as though light had contacted it. If he used a large piece of ore, the light area was correspondingly large. If he used a small piece, it was tiny.

Becquerel's scientific training told him the answer. There was something in the uranium that caused the plate to change. What, he didn't know. Was there a strange salt in the uranium that produced the necessary effect? He couldn't say.

Next, Becquerel varied the chief one of uranium, pitchblende, a mineral which came from northern Bohemia. This was a curious rock; it emitted the anomaly. For, instead of reflecting a photographic effect proportional to the amount of uranium present, this ore was much more powerful than its uranium content could account for.

Becquerel's next observation was obvious.

"There must be," he noted, "another element with power to affect a photographic plate many times greater than uranium itself."

Becquerel was a busy man. He couldn't take the time for the research involved to trace this mystery down. He would have to pass the job on to some colleagues. Someone who wouldn't give up until the answer was achieved.

Ah, he had the perfect person! Someone with whom he had worked before, a tireless, energetic worker. Someone who had the dignity and enthusiasm of a trained and gifted experimenter. That person was a girl.

Yes, Henri Becquerel had chosen the right person, indeed. The girl he had selected to work with the pitchblende ore was Marie Curie! And the element she later isolated from the pitchblende, the element responsible for the effects on the photographic plate was—radium!

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SCIENCE *Question* BOX

FISH THAT CHANGE COLOR

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

Are there any organisms known to ecologists, besides chameleons, which can change color?—D. F., Los Vegas, New Mexico.

The common cuttlefish can change its color like a chameleon, but much more rapidly. It absorbs light and its form changes in passing through the blue from sunlight to sea greenish light.

It appears that it is all a matter of chemical reactions, stimulated by light reflected from the body, and the change in color is slight. When light falls upon the skin the effect is carried by the stationary blood, which discharges a substance called retinophen.

This is carried by the blood to the pigment cells and causes the skin to become dark.

When light from a dark surface enters the skin eye, certain nerve fibers coming in the skin and being on the outside, secrete a substance which also acts on the pigment cells causing the skin to become light reflected from a white surface has an opposite effect, causing a change toward light color. The darkening caused by lightning seems to be abnormal.—J.M.

ROTATION OF THE EARTH

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

What proof have we that the Earth rotates on its axis, besides the phenomenon of day and night?—C. W., Dallas, Texas.

The Earth's rotation is best demonstrated by the Foucault pendulum. In 1851, Jean Bernard Léon Foucault made a great discovery, suspended a heavy iron globe from the dome of the Pantheon at Paris. The slender wire over the long form was 67m to swing equally in any direction.

When set in motion the pendulum would swing for several hours unaffected by its surroundings. And when a device constructed at the North or South Pole of the Earth, the ground below the pendulum bob would have

swung around completely in 24 hours. There are one or two proofs not mentioned which show that the pendulum had changed the direction of its swing.

All the motion there would have been to swing, and at intermediate points a proper motion movement. That is, what would have been at North and what is only demonstrated in equatorial regions. The pendulum can also be used to demonstrate this rotation.—J.M.

DID THE MOON BELONG TO US?

Editor, SCIENCE QUESTION BOX:

I've heard it said that the Moon was once a part of the Earth. Is this just idle speculation, or is there a basis for such a hypothesis?—L. M., New York, N. Y.

The Moon may once have been part of Earth, according to thousands of small rocky objects called "bolides" discovered in the southwestern corner of the Pacific Ocean are interesting evidence that the Moon was once a part of the Earth. The bolides are small, rounded by the heat of the air, and are found in the vicinity of the Pacific Ocean.

Scientists have known of these bolides for more than a century, but when they were first seen in 1868, the explanation given for their origin.

Dr. Huxley's explanation of the phenomenon is based largely upon the general "bolide" theory of the origin of the Moon developed by Sir George Darwin, and which is that the Pacific Ocean is a hole in the North American when the Moon was torn away from the earth by a powerful tidal force.

Some of the bolide matter which was set going away with the Moon had not been immediately to the Earth. Dr. Huxley said, but rather continued to revolve out in space for some time. These particles he believed, were added in combination to the matter

which is contained in Saturn's Rings today, and are the same "bolide" matter found in the Pacific area.

The composition of the primitive Earth at the time of the Moon's capture is not known today, but it is generally believed that the matter composing the Earth was not too different from the matter which is today. According to Dr. Huxley's theory, the Earth was made up of an inner layer of hard granite with a lower layer of soft basalt beneath the granite.

When the Moon captured, the outermost material, it was very probably that the outer of the Moon struck the Pacific area of the granite layer and probably joined them as the material from the granite layer was already soft, being heated. It was this hot granite layer and would therefore produce the material which formed the ring today.

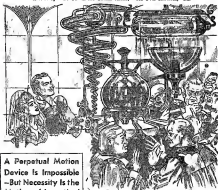
These theories were devised to show the Earth's structure at present believed to produce the typical forms which are characteristic of the Moon today.—J.M.

In this department the editor of STARTLING STORIES will endeavor to answer your questions on matters which are of interest to the general public. As much assistance as possible will be rendered here, but the editor cannot undertake any personal correspondence. Natural questions of general interest will be given the preference. Address your questions to SCIENCE QUESTION BOX, STARTLING STORIES, 21 West 40th Street, New York City.

The Machine That Had No Flaws

By RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "The Girl in the Golden Atom," "The Great American," etc.



**A Perpetual Motion
Device Is Impossible
—But Necessity Is the
Mother of Invention!**

The judges went back to their seated drinking and chattering.

KING ZARF was in a quandary because of his daughter. She was outside now, with still another young man. Through the open doorway of Zarf's softly illuminated palace room, the tones of the young man's mesmerizing voice came floating in from the shimmering moonlit terrace.

"Tetra, dear, you are so beautiful. Flinging back a trillion star-glins, the depths of space remind me of thine eyes."

"Oh, Alfredo, you say such pretty things!"

King Zarf frowned. He shuddered so uncontrollably that his ample abdomen shook visibly beneath his gold-cloth tunic and the broad gold-mesh belt. He pushed a button on the table edge beside him. The door slid closed instantly and effectively cutting off the voices. Then he shifted his chair and stared moodily through the oval palace window. Down the palm-clad declivity he gazed. There he saw the broad sea, shining in the white light of the moon and the stars. The isles of Greece, his nearest neighbors, peered just above the western horizon.

But King Zarf was in no mood for the beauties of Nature. The problem of Teena had to be solved. At eighteen, her luscious beauty fully matured, she was ripe for marriage. Zarf couldn't deny it, though he didn't want her married. Since her mother's death, who had ever been able to run the palace household the way Teena did? Who understood the little things that made him comfortable as well as Teena? Who else would ever learn how to put just that superb finishing touch to the chef's cookery? What would life be without that finishing touch? Nothing. Nothing at all.

It was a dilemma, but it was not only Teena herself. A princess of Albarr must obey her father's commands. It was easy to claim that a suitable prince-consort had yet to appear. But Zarf's six million subjects were demanding an heir—a male heir. They were demanding it so furiously that the king's counselors, especially the aged Peppulos, were advising Zarf to let Teena marry.

Albarr, last of Earth's little kingdoms, considered the crown a symbol for all the world to revere. Aboard from all modern entanglements of the three great World Federations, its palm-chad hills and blue-green waters were still peaceful, beautiful, old-fashioned. The bustle of modern civilization seldom reached here. Great stratosphere liners winged high overhead, mere tiny dots. But they never landed here when emergency brought them down to Zarf's small but complete airport.

Moodily the brooding Zarf stared through his ornate window. How could he stop the pressure which would deprive him of Teena, if only for another few years. Like Falstaff, so often smiling, he sprawled in his great chair, gazed with meditation.

SUDDENLY the idea came to him. He thumped the table with his fist flat. He had found the way out. He could save his face, keep Teena, yet seem willing to give her up. The idea was novel to the modern world, though old-fashioned and completely in the tradition of beautiful Albarr and its jolly King Zarf.

All his six million subjects would recognize its romantic quality at once. But

that was only half of his idea. He could bring in a touch of modern science that would convince his subjects of his concern for Albarr's welfare. He knew how inferior his subjects felt about science. Albarr had never made a single discovery in science.

But imagine their enthusiasm now! Teena's beauty was to inspire scientific research. Apparently Albarr would get its prince-consort, and at the same time gain scientific recognition. . . .

The idea was indeed an inspiration, from heaven. Zarf's jolly moon-face was wreathed in smiles. His triple chin bobbed as he chuckled. Then he pressed a button to summon one of his attendants.

"Bring me wine," he commanded. "Chardon Nineteen-forty-five is none too good today. I'll want two glasses, Marko. Have the chef prepare some of the melted cheese sardinet. For two, Marko. My usual portion, and some for the Princess Teena."

"Yes, Your Highness."

"And tell my daughter to send that young man home. She will dine with her father."

It surprised Teena, naturally. Quietly she brought his slippers and his pipe. She settled him in his great chair with just the right cushion behind his head. Nominally she served him his four plates of toast, the sardinet, and poured his wine.

He watched her admiringly. He was her father, but he knew she was incredibly lovely. His eyes went soft as he gazed at her wavy mass of black hair, her petrician little face with its lustrous dark eyes and luscious red lips.

"Good news for me, Father?" she murmured at last.

"Oh, very good, Teena. Very good indeed." He removed the smile from his face, summoned a judicial frown. "I have been wondering whether you are right. I think you are old enough to have a husband."

"Oh, Father dear?"

"Who was that young man out there tonight?"

"Alfredo," she said excitedly. "Alfredo D'Costa. You must have heard of him. His father, and his father's father, his whole family has been prominent here in Tyron. I'll have him in

tomorrow, to meet you personally—"

His gesture waved it away.

"We shall pick you a suitable husband."

"We?"

He let himself smile just a little.

"I mean, to say, Teena, we shall let him pick himself. I will not have an ordinary man for a son-in-law. He must be a man of accomplishment, a man all would be proud of. He must have the welfare of our great Albarras firmly rooted in his heart. A man of scientific achievement—" Zari memorized his words as he spoke. The poor Albarras, self-conscious of their lack of discoveries, would love this. "His great research should make all the world realize Albarras's scientific qualities."

"But, Father, I don't understand."

"You will, Teena," Zari sat up abruptly. The question fell from behind his head and Teena hastened to readjust it. "We are going to have a contest," he said. "A scientific contest. I will award my daughter's hand to any man who can win it."

IN SPITE her alarmed puzzlement, Teena's dark eyes twinkled.

"Father dear, you have been reading the 'Arabian Nights' again."

"Well, what if I have?" he retorted. "One can learn a lot about life from those old tales. Don't be selfish, Teena. Our people must lose their sense of scientific inferiority. Of course there will be world-wide publicity for Albarras. But the main thing is that Albarras will appreciate the romanticism."

He could see that she was eyeing him narrowly. He made his judicial frown deepen.

"In a nutshell, child," he said with sudden briskness, "I am going to announce that the man who marries you must raise the scientific prestige of Albarras so that all the world will applaud us. To win this contest, with you for its prize—"

"What does he have to do?" she asked suspiciously.

"He will have to be the discoverer of perpetual motion," King Zari said flatly. "Now there is a discovery worthy of Albarras's princess! The man who does it, we will acclaim—"

"But, Father. Perpetual motion has

been proved to be impossible."

"Nothing is impossible, Teena. I forbid you to say a thing like that. Impossible, indeed! Would you have said that in Nineteen-hundred, if I had demanded that he show us how to fling voices through the air with the speed of light? To science, nothing is impossible."

Teena stopped listening. She was thinking of Alfredo. . . .

Whatever Teena's dismay at her father's absurd scheme, the young and handsome Alfredo D'costa more than matched it. She told him about it the next night, when they sat again on the softly moonlit terrace of the palace.

"Perpetual motion?" the young man exclaimed bitterly. "Is that all I have to find to win you? He knows perpetual motion is scientifically impossible. Why, that old buzzard is doing what they used to do in the dark ages—give you a contest that you can't win."

She nodded, but she wasn't perturbed now. The wily King Zari had fathered a girl as shrewd as himself. He should have been the first to suspect that possibility. She drew Alfredo closer, and put her slim, jeweled hand on his shoulder.

"You will win it, Alfredo," she whispered confidently. "I had a talk with old Poppulus today. He will be chief of the Board of Judges that Father will appoint to decide the contest."

"What if he is?" Alfredo asked dejectedly. "How can that help us?"

Princess Teena blushed slightly.

"He agrees that Albarras needs an heir. So I told him about you. He thinks you would be suitable."

"He does? Well, that's nice of him."

"So I fixed it," she said. "We discussed it fully."

"The—the *heh*?"

"Oh, Alfredo dear, don't be silly. We discussed perpetual motion. Poppulus says that every machine submitted will, of course, seem to work. For hundreds of years machines like that have been made. But they all have flaws. In this case, the duty of the judges will be to find the flaws and point them out. So all you have to do—"

"Is to build a machine without flaws," he broke in savagely. "All I have to do is discover perpetual motion. You seem

to think that's pretty easy. For hundreds of years, every nation has had thousands of fools who went crazy trying to do that. And all I have to do is succeed where geniuses failed."

"Build a machine," she continued, ignoring his interruption, "with flaws in it, of course. Naturally you can't make a perfect machine. But hide its flaws reasonably well. Poppulus and the other judges will fail to find them—in your machine. You'll be declared the winner. You'll get the prize, I'll have the husband I want, Albana will be famous—and everybody will be happy!"

"But why should they fail to find the flaws?" he asked in bewilderment.

She put his arm around her waist and snuggled against him.

"You are silly, aren't you? A woman's smile and money can do almost anything. Of course I have to promise to do everything I can for the advancement of the judges when I am queen. Also, every Albanian—and Poppulus most of all—knows that the crown must have an heir—a male heir."

FROM his seat at the enormous banquet table, young Alfredo surveyed his fellow contestants. He shook his head disapprovingly. King Zarf had plainly not cared a bit about the physical appearance of his daughter's potential husband. Every Albanian with any sort of scientific background—from garage mechanic to physics instructor—had been summoned to the palace to hear the rules of the spectacular contest.

Alfredo saw Teena look apprehensively at the pimply youths, the terrified stammerers, the portly man with bald head, the quavering detonda. In her silvery robe, she sat at the end of the table, her face white and horrified. At the other end, Zarf sprawled snugly in his huge chair, beaming at his guests.

"One of you," he said expansively, "is destined to become my son-in-law. These are the rules for the contest that will bring eternal fame to Albana and a beautiful princess to the winner. . . ."

Alfredo didn't listen. He was too busy pondering the problem of what his machine should look like.

It must be impressive, of course. How about little rolling balls winding down

intricate passageways, rising in tiny elevators that could be powered by the force of the balls' descent? Alfredo discarded that thought. It had been done too often. Every school child knew friction would halt it within a few years, and the output would be less than the input. Why not have water dripping on hinged wheels that carry the water up so it can drop again? No, that was old stuff, too. . . .

Alfredo tried to return Teena's sudden, furtive smile, but he knew how weak and wan his effort was. He felt tense and worried. Teena thought she had fixed everything. But what would happen if she hadn't? What if something went wrong? The judges could change their minds at the last moment and refuse to be bribed. That was bad enough to make him shudder. The next thought made sweat break through his skin.

Suppose one of his rivals actually did discover perpetual motion!

Frightenedly he stared at the pimply youths, the portly gentlemen, the trembling detonda. He knew their appearances had nothing to do with their minds. Few geniuses of the past had been glamour boys. Some had been at their greatest when they were practically children, the others well on in years. . . .

Alfredo was not the tinniest man in that vast banquet hall as King Zarf continued explaining the rules of the contest. All the men glanced hopefully at Princess Teena. She had done her best to appear her plainest, but she couldn't hide her luscious beauty.

Sunlight slanted goldenly through the tall leaded windows. In the heavy summer air, the light fell in imposing cathedral shafts. On the table before Zarf stood a goblet of wine, which the sunlight pierced and made a gorgeous amber color.

For some reason that caught and held Alfredo's eye, he wondered worriedly. It may have been the carving glass of the goblet, shining brilliantly in the light. Whatever it was, the amber wine seemed queerly magnified in one patch, where tiny motes shifted and danced.

"The Russian movement," he thought idly. "The eternal dance of the molecules. . . ."

He almost leaped to his feet. Instead, he gulped and held his breath, looking around the room in fear. Suppose somebody else there had guessed his secret!

LOUDLESS and bright dawned the day of the contest. But by late afternoon the sky turned even brighter blue, or perhaps it was because of the contrasting white clouds that had suddenly appeared. The sun was a flattened red ball dropping into the Western Sea, where the green isles of Greece peered just over the horizon.

Abruptly the electric sirens wailed. The judges were assembling in the plaza before the palace. The favored aristocracy crowded the newly constructed stands. In the center of the grandstand, King Zarf sprawled in his box. He was resplendent in gold-cloth robes, with Teena, glorious in silver, sitting beside him. Facing them across the aisle, behind a long table, the six austere judges sat in a row. They frowned with the proper air of authority.

Electric amplifiers bewailed the names of the contestants, who came out one by one with their competing machines. Overhead, the drooping planes circled and dipped in salute. The crowd cheered, waved flags and then fell into hushes of expectancy.

"Manuel Palacios," the amplifier shouted. And a skinny giant dragged out a weird tangle of wires and tubing, which he demonstrated amid intent silence. When he left the field, the loud-speaker yelled again.

An old man named, Marquard Georges Polices, stumbled uncertainly to his gigantic machine, which did practically nothing. The crowd watched in puzzlement as he went back.

"Alfredo D'costa!"

No one could know how Teena's heart jumped to her throat when she saw the coming heir to the Crown of Albans march across the plaza. Nobody noticed that all the judges leaned forward, frowning even more judiciously at the pale young man who stood before them.

All the perpetual motion machines were lined up in a row now. The judges walked from one to the other, frowning speculatively at some, passing up others

with a single glance.

Most of them were replicas of the ancient fallacies. By their hugeness and intricacy, they tried to disguise such immutable laws as the fact that energy lost by friction can never be replaced, or that water cannot run uphill without losing, bit by bit, its original kinetic energy.

The flawless machine had never existed. It never could exist. The learned judges had no trouble pointing out the errors of almost all the machines. A few had been so cleverly constructed that sharp peering, measuring and gauging had to discover those flaws.

One by one the aspirants for Teena's hand slunk away in disgrace. But they should have known that defeat was inevitable. The Universe is not perfect. Even the most rigid law has its exceptions. Therefore why should man be able to construct a flawless machine?

But the crowd watched everything closely. Princess Teena clenched her little fists while her heart thumped wildly. Only one person in that throng thought at all of food. With a lap-board across the arms of his throne, King Zarf ate his meal with gusto, washing it down with goblets of the finest wine. He had no reason for not eating. Everything was going well. Why shouldn't it? No one can do the impossible. . . .

ZARF was getting bored, though.

When he finished his meal, there was only one contraption left on the plaza. All the others had been removed, probably to be thrown away by their disgraced inventors. Only for the sake of appearances did the king watch the judges operate that last machine, and his lack of interest was well concealed.

The final invention was the smallest of the lot, merely transparent tubes filled with circulating amber fluid. Starting in a large, illuminated goblet, where the liquid was apparently quiescent, there seemed to be an endless sequence of amber-filled tubes. Perhaps motes were swimming eccentrically through it. But no one could see that without being quite close.

Starting from the goblet, the fluid went through a tube as fine as a hair. At that point it seemed endowed with a slight forward movement. But it did not flow uphill nor downhill. The tiny forward current was on an exact level.

But slowly the tube widened. Instead of being less swift in that wider space, the current increased its speed. Where the winding, widening tube grew as large as a man's arm, it surged and lashed violently ahead. From there it spouted through a dynamo. The rotating shaft made a weird light spring up and leap through prisms, then spray the goblet with a vivid spectrum.

Beyond the turbine, the liquid again lay motionless, in a flat, shallow, unlighted pool. But at the end of the pool it filtered through a needle-valve and started the cycle once more.

Drawing at the mouthpiece of his ornate pipe, King Zarl gazed with vague interest at the strange contraption, over which the judges were arguing, peering and measuring. Whose invention was it? Zarl turned to the contestants' row of seats. Only one man sat there—pale and worried, chewing his fingernails nervously. Zarl recognized him as young Alfredo D'Costa, and that made him feel even more confident. Until then he had felt a slight tremor of fear because of the judges' lengthy discussion. How could a young dandy like D'Costa discover perpetual motion? It was impossible.

Suddenly old Poppulus broke away from the huddle of excited judges. The arena screamed and fell silent. Into the tense hush, Poppulus shouted at the top of his voice.

"Alfredo D'Costa is the winner! He has discovered perpetual motion!"

Zarl gagged on the smoke, almost swallowed the mouthpiece as he leaped up.

"What?" he roared above the cheers of the crowd.

But nobody was paying any attention to him. There was too much noise, too many people were surging forward around Alfredo. Teena was leaning far over the box rail and begging the bewildered young man.

"It can't be!" Zarl howled. "It can't be!"

He sat down heavily, morbidly aware of his lost comforts. The cheering and the triumphant hums and rish went on without him. . . .

TEENA closed the door of Poppulus' office behind her. But even in the silence of the room, she lowered her voice when she smiled charmingly at the judges who had gathered there after the contest.

"I can't thank you enough," she said. "Here is your reward for a just decision."

But the judges were not listening to her. Frankly puzzled and gaping, they stood around the perpetual motion machine Alfredo D'Costa had invented. Even when their princies spoke again to them, they went on peering and whispering anxiously.

"Look here," one of them burst out. "There must be flaws in it. But they're so cleverly hidden that I don't see them even now."

Scratching through his white wig, old Poppulus turned away, shrugging his thin shoulders. He caught sight of Teena and rushed over to her.

"Princies," he cried, when she held out the bag of money. He pushed it away decisively. "We have earned nothing from you. Our decision was absolutely honest. Of course there are flaws in the machine, but we confess that we cannot find them!"

Alfredo stepped out of a corner of the shadowed room.

"But there are no flaws, gentlemen," he stated. "That actually is a perpetual motion machine."

Smiles broke out on the judge's faces. "Please," said old Poppulus humbly. "As Princess Teena's betrothed, you command our respect, naturally. We can believe that you are clever enough to trick us. In fact, we can't believe anything else. We can't admit the possibility of perpetual motion. That is an obvious impossibility."

"But it isn't," Alfredo replied insistently. "Haven't you ever heard of the Brownian Movement? A man named Robert Brown once looked at a shining fluid through a telescope. For some reason the tiny particles suspended in the liquid seemed to have a queer, persistent motion of their own.

He thought they were living organisms, but it didn't take long to disprove that idea. When the kinetic theory of energy was developed, scientists understood why those particles danced around in the fluid. It was because of the thermal agitation of the suspending medium.

Teena had never seen her young suitor so authoritative before. He looked and sounded almost professorial as he lectured these baffled old men.

"The tiny particles," he continued, "were being bombarded on all sides by the high-speed molecules of the liquid. A smoke particle floating in air is bombarded in the same way. The resultant impulse is sometimes nearly zero, but sometimes not quite. Inequalities result in the irregular movement of the particle. So my problem was simple. With the prismatic light generated by the resultant power of the machine, I directed the bombardment so the particles would migrate only in one direction.

"That takes place in the illuminated goblet, the starting point. Then the migrating particles set up a tiny current in the threadlike emerging tube. From there on, Nature takes care of the rest. The bombarded molecule acts like a huge molecule with a determinable speed of thermal motion. It communicates that speed to the molecules of the fluid.

"The result is a current that gains proportionately in power as it progresses. All I had to do was supply the original coordination of the direction

of bombardment. Too bad it isn't mathematically perfect. If it were, it could roll along, increasing progressively in power, until we'd have something like a dozen Victoria Falls at the end!"

IN the silence that followed the conclusion of his explanation, the judges turned helplessly to the machine again. When they looked back at Alfredo, they were grinning like men who knew they should be kicking themselves.

"Heh, heh!" Poppulus cackled in embarrassment. "The Brownian Movement—of course. I don't know how we ever overlooked that."

"Why not?" replied Alfredo diplomatically. "Robert Brown discovered the eccentrically migrating particles in Eighteen-twenty-seven. But it wasn't until Nineteen-five that it was given a mathematical analysis by Albert Einstein. He formulated his analysis by basing it on the law of the equ-partition of energy. But even then, and for so many years after, nobody realized that right under their noses was perpetual motion!"

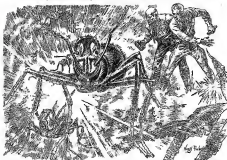
The judges went back to their admiration of the clever machine. Clucking and chattering excitedly, they almost drowned Alfredo's whisper as he took Teena in his arms.

"Perpetual motion is probably a great discovery," he said softly. "But we've got perpetual emotion, haven't we, Teena? That's a lot more important. . . ."

STEINMETZ, Electrical Wizard, in THRILLS in SCIENCE Next Issue



Social Insects With Uncanny Intelligence Organize for a Desperate Foray on Their Human Enemies



Halloran threw the dynamite with all his strength

KINGDOM OF THE ANTS

By GERALD BOWMAN

Author of "The Crime of Mr. Latta," "The Unknown Menace," etc.

WHEN Olive Halloran came ashore from the small coasting-boat at Melbourne, Australia, he did an unusual thing. But then the coasting-boat had been unusually crowded.

Its passenger list was made up of bush wanderers forced back into the towns to seek a bare living. It included practically every known nationality and species, as is the way of such craft.

Especially species!

Having got ashore, Halloran made his way to the nearest water-side outfitters and went into the walled back

yard. There, while shouting orders to the amused proprietor, he took off every stitch of clothing he was wearing, placed his garments in a pile on the stone flags, and set fire to them.

The coasting-boat had been very crowded. But having divested himself of his own passenger list, used the outfitters' bath and arrayed himself in brand new clothes and linen, Halloran felt better.

Such little incidents as this, unpleasant though they are, quite frequently come the way of those who spend their lives traveling. Halloran drew a breath of relief, dismissed the port four

days coasting on an odoriferous Turkish bath of a steamer from his mind, and forthwith turned to the nearest hotel for civilized refreshment.

In Melbourne, he had many friends. He also had a nice, tidy spot of capital left to him after his last venture. And so he had notified a friend of his coming, since he had an idea that starting a small sideline business might be both interesting and profitable.

In a certain long bar, famous throughout the Seven Seas, Halloran sought inspiration out of a long glass—and smelted pear drops. It is a scientifically proved fact that the smell of the common or garden pear drop is about as penetrating as that of the ganja ray. Like most men, Halloran could not remember having noticed it since his schooldays.

He glanced around with a grin and looked for the small boy. He found at his elbow a small man with rather thick spectacles, a short white beard, and a totally bald head. Moreover the small man smiled, shifted something in his mouth and announced:

"Mr. Halloran, I believe?"

"You're right," said Halloran. "About half right, that is. The non-fare-paying passengers of the boat I have just left, got about half of me before I gave up the unequal struggle and let them have my clothes! Still, I don't know that I can remember—"

THE small man held out a neat visiting card upon which was inscribed:

PROFESSOR HUMPHREY FLINT
F. R. S., F. Z. S.

"I think I follow your meaning, Mr. Halloran," said Professor Flint with a charming smile. "You see, it so happens that I knew a friend of yours, Mr. John Channing. From him I learned some details of your career and—er—your reputation. May I say that I am honored to make your acquaintance? Mr. Channing told me that you might be arriving on that boat. I saw you go into the outfitter's."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought that this time was not a useful one in which to start an acquaintance," he said somewhat dubi-

cately. "A curious coincidence, Mr. Halloran. For many years I have been a keen student of the social annals. In fact that is largely the reason—"

"Social?" said Halloran, with a slight shiver. "Believe me, that's the kind of society for which I have no further ambitions, Professor! Of course, any friend of Channing's is a friend of mine. I am delighted to meet you. But—"

The professor produced a paper bag from his pocket and proffered it hospitably.

"May I offer you a pear drop?" he inquired. "My throat has always given me trouble, and I find them very soothing. Not? Very well, Mr. Halloran. Now, with your permission, I will come to the point without further delay. I wish to go up into the Northern Territory. I wish to find a certain district, about which the aborigines have certain quite peculiar legends. For several years I have been collecting these legends, checking them, and making a roughly accurate map as to the position the district occupies. It is, I fear, extremely remote, in wild, unexplored country, and far from any of the existing air routes."

"That's pretty interesting," said Halloran. "I've crossed the Northern Territory once or twice, but if Channing's given you the idea that I know it well—"

"Mr. Channing told me," said the professor simply, "that if I went there alone, or with ordinary guides, I should either fail to reach my objective altogether, or I should never return alive! In fact Mr. Channing told me that you, sir, were the only man who would be likely to help me find the place and make it possible for me to carry out my investigations of the terrain, before returning."

"He—er—went so far as to say, if you will forgive me, that while you had a habit of getting into trouble, you had a positive genius for getting out of it! Perhaps I should add, also, that Mr. Channing further gave it as his opinion that neither of us would return alive. Although I am not disposed to agree with him."

The professor beamed and took another pear drop.

Halloran slid down off his tall stool,

a slow grin spreading over his forceful, sunburned face.

"Professor," he said, "I think I like you. You've got some quaint scientific theory that you want to check up, or investigate, in a place which you are told on good authority is just sudden death. And so you are looking for a man to take you there?"

"In all investigations there are extraneous difficulties," began the professor quietly.

HALLORAN let out an explosive laugh. To hear a high probability of death, by thirst or exposure, described as "an extraneous difficulty" touched his sense of humor—and increased his admiration of Professor Flint, pear drops and all.

"Well, what's the investigation?" he chuckled. "I ought to break John Channing's neck for this. The old scoundrel knows, only too well, the sort of things that tempt me."

"It is most interesting—most interesting," said the professor eagerly. "I told you, my dear Mr. Halloran, that I have spent many years studying the social insects. These do not include the—or—close companions of your recent voyage. To a large extent, the ant and his sub species—bees and wasps are close relatives—come under the 'social' heading.

"My special studies have been among the hymenoptera. That is, the ants, which build hills or nests and have a complex social system by which they organize and govern their various communities. As you undoubtedly know, the ordinary species found in civilized countries such as England, conduct themselves like a nation, organized by an intelligent government.

"There are the normal males and females with intelligent heads, well developed eyes and wings. Next in caste below them are the wingless but large-headed and powerful soldier ants, who are occupied only in attack or defense. Below them there is the lowest class, the workers, in which we find a simple thorax, no wings, and small, simple eyes instead of the compound organs only to be found in—"

"Quite so," said Halloran, rather hastily. "I'm deeply interested, of

course, Professor. But perhaps we'd better get to the main point, don't you think?"

The professor appeared to swallow the remains of his pear drop.

"I was coming to it, my dear Mr. Halloran," he said. "I was coming to it. In my years of study, I have examined hymenoptera in practically every country of this world. Until I came to Australia, I thought I had investigated every species known to natural history. Then, while traveling in Queensland two years ago, I first heard this legend, spoken of almost in fear by the aborigines. As I say, I followed the legend up and obtained every bit of information about it I could. My interest grew, and I got more details. I found the thing surrounded and obscured by a great deal of superstition and fright—native exaggeration."

"But what was the tale?" said Halloran, almost impatiently.

"It is a tale I have come almost to believe," said the professor quietly. "According to the legend there is, up in the Northern Territory, a type of ant—a colony of ants—which are actually of human intelligence! I have told you already that ordinary ants are almost human in their government and organization. It is an accepted fact that they have their upper and lower classes. Science has proved that they have developed through their history, just as mankind. They have passed through the phase of hunting, where like primitive men, they killed for their food. They went through a pastoral stage—English ants can often be observed catching aphides; they, senseless insects. These aphides they keep, and actually milk for the honey dew which the creatures have stored. In actual fact they are keeping cows, just as mankind did in the second stage of human development."

HALLORAN was deeply interested. "Go on," he said.

"Man passed from the pastoral to the agricultural," said the professor. "In other words, he not only kept cows, but he learned how to cultivate the ground and grow crops. The ants have done the same! Many other observers besides myself have found ant-hills in

which large parts of the tunnels and corridors were covered in a growth of fungus. This, the ants use for food. They collect the fungus swamp, bring it to the ant-hill, and plant it there, so that it will grow. Why, Mr. Halloran, certain types of ants even make slaves!

"The *Formica sanguinea*—a European species—raid the hives of the *Formica fusca*, and take pupae; eggs. These eggs they carry to their own homes, and hatch them out. The new brood, thereafter, are set to work for the raiders. They spend their whole lives as worker-slaves! That is almost human intelligence, Mr. Halloran! Now, according to the legend of which I have spoken, there are ants somewhere in the Northern Territory of more than human intelligence!

"The natives swear that they grow to an enormous size—four or five inches in length. They attack animals; they attack men, even. They build their hills as more than forty feet high. They carry on organized warfare, with armies and scouts, battalions and regiments. They are devoted by one governing king, or marshal."

"And that," breathed Halloran, "is where you want me to take you?"

"Mr. Halloran," said the professor, imploringly, "to be first to make such a discovery, to photograph it, to bring back proofs . . . My dear sir, I am told that you are a scientist. Is it necessary for me to say that such an achievement would be worth any trivial risk?"

His eyes were blazing behind the thick lenses of his glasses. His small form was tense; his courage was a challenge.

"Lord help me!" said Halloran. "There's not enough of you to make a decent meal for a fringe dog, but by golly, Professor, you've got what it takes! I'm the biggest fool under the Southern Cross—but I'm your man!"

With a reckless grin he shot out a hand like a gun.

"You'll take me, Mr. Halloran?" cried the professor. "You'll help me—with your knowledge, your resources, your strength and courage?"

"Well, I promise I won't come back without you," chuckled Halloran. "But if we find that ant story is just 'my eye'

after all—well, I promise I'll shake hands with every smelly aboriginal we meet on the way home!"

Precisely one week later Olive Halloran found himself well and truly committed to about the grimmest and most unpleasant expedition of his whole hoccite career. By one of the established airlines, he and Professor Flint crossed the vast arid wastes of Central Australia, paying a heavy charge for deviation from the normal route to a point which was as near as possible to their objective, according to the professor's rough map.

They had supplies for a month, and arranged for the plane to return to that point in one month's time, to pick them up. Then, following the map, they set off into the bush, and for ten days more pushed ahead on as arduous a march as Halloran had ever known.

Out of long experience, Halloran had put together their supplies and packs with extreme care. Each carried a rifle, revolver and ammunition. Food was condensed as much as possible, and the greatest amount of weight was given over to water supply in metal bottles.

Apart from all of which, Halloran carried a special metal case in which, as on previous expeditions, he found much comfort. It was a case of dynamite sticks, carefully packed in special padding. Before now he had blasted his way through a tribe of yelling head-hunters.

ON the whole, he preferred them to overgrown ants, still—

It was on the seventh day that he started swearing quietly at his companion. Magnetic rocks in the district, or magnetic disturbances in the air, were making the needle behave like a tortoise. The day was heavily overcast with hot, tropic clouds which at this season would not clear for weeks.

There was no means of knowing just how long the compass had been out of reading. In short, Halloran was hopelessly lost, and without the vaguest indication as to direction. More than two hundred miles from the path of any established airline, probably five hundred from the nearest civilization. Water low, and food running short.

"What a substance," said Professor Humphrey Flint, when at last the drowning Halloran had to tell him. "It'll increase our difficulties, when returning. Still, we cannot be far away now. I'm so relieved that I've already seen traces which might, most certainly, indicate hymenoptera or termites of really astonishing size."

He pulled out a crumpled packet, but Halloran knocked it out of his hand, scattering pear drops among the tangled undergrowth.

"You'll get just one day to get a nice, big ant to sit for its picture, Professor," he snapped. "Meanwhile, I've no ambition to see you fold up with third madness, and those random of years are just about the shortest cut there is to it. I have an ambition to get out of this alive, someday, although that doesn't seem likely. And you've coming too!"

One way and another it was an eventful day.

The first event was the finding of a shack, near the crest of a hill. It was built upon wooden supports about four feet from the ground, and was obviously the work of skilful white men. Halloran made for it and took the entrance steps at a run. At least, he intended to.

But in actual fact the solid-looking, three-inch-thick wooden steps collapsed under his feet, as though they had been made of pie crust! The utter unexpectedness of it sent him pitching headlong. He fell waist high across the threshold of the door, and with a ghastly feeling, went straight through that floor, and the supports below, to fall on the grass beneath.

Halloran hung himself up again, his heart tauting over. For he saw movement where he fell; glittering, undulating movement all around him. Thousands and myriads of ants—small-headed, wingless, and about half an inch long.

As he jumped up and began staggering out, he drew a sharp breath from between clenched teeth. For as his head rose above the smashed shack floor, he saw an ant such as he had never seen in his life before—and prayed he would never see again.

It was about four feet away, and it

was nearly six inches long! On hind legs it was standing almost upright, its multiple eyes glittering in the light from the doorway. The antennae were standing straight up on top of its head, vibrating with a curious, sensitive movement, as though they were sending some kind of etheric, silent signal!

Worst of all, in those multiple eyes, Halloran had a sudden, appalling sense of there being a clear, more-than-human intelligence. An intelligence of super-human cunning and cruelty!

Practically he leaped backwards, beating at his clothes. But in that second, everything around him was gray with whirling dust. Jumping and stamping and beating, he flung himself out into the clear sunshine. To his relief he saw that apparently none of the creatures were upon him. None had made the slightest attack.

Flint had heard the little professor talking wildly and excitedly; knew also that he was doing something or other with his camera. Then Halloran saw the shack collapse. It swayed, broke inward. The roof came down, and dust whirled up. Then, like magic, in a few seconds the whole thing was flat—dead flat! Nothing but a spread of dust where it had stood a few moments before.

"Wonderful!" the professor was shouting. "Magnificent! The wood powdered by the tumbling of the ants!"

Halloran was more badly shaken than he had ever been in his life before. He whipped up his dynamite case, loosened the packing, and pulled up two or three sticks, ready for immediate use.

But Professor Flint had turned and was running as fast as his short legs would carry him to the top of the hill. There he paused and stretched again, as Halloran followed.

Halloran heard distinct sounds of movement from the undergrowth. His blood was cold in his veins. A tree, some feet away, seemed to change color as his eyes rested upon it. He knew instinctively that the color change was a swarm of ants which had swept up it—ants that were watching the two intruders with all the cold intensity of their compound eyes.

He had a feeling of being surrounded, of being maneuvered into a trap by millions upon millions of cunning intelligences, all under the domination of an uncanny leader.

"Get your pictures quickly, Professor!" he panted as he reached the little man. "We're getting out of this! There's a limit to everything."

"Yes, indeed," agreed the professor breathlessly. "We are in danger, Mr. Halloran. These creatures are watching our movements. They are planning and marshaling their forces like a well directed army. It is wonderful—wonderful! But of course our investigations will be useless if we cannot carry them back to civilization. Still, look—"

His small, bony hands were trembling as they wound the speed of his camera. Halloran looked, and saw a fairly deep valley, at the bottom of which was a sun-dried river bed. To the right of the river bed the ground dropped away in a sheer cliff, for perhaps two hundred feet. Obviously it had once been an enormous waterfall. But around the valley, towering up on all sides, were tapering black steeples, between fifty and sixty feet high.

Halloran whipped up the binoculars which hung on their strap round the little man's neck. While the camera clicked, and clicked again, he noted the tallness of the unbelievable anti-hills.

And then he stiffened. For on the top of it, on a flat circular platform, he saw an ant which was a foot long. If it was an inch. Yet the body of the creature was actually small in relation to his head. Heavy that head was, with enormous multiple eyes, and jaws which could be seen moving.

On the lower galleries of the hill, armies of workers moved busily, streaming out in lines away through the undergrowth, while lines of them came pattering back. Those that went out carried tiny fragments in their jaws—fragments that might be pieces of leaf or messages or signs.

Halloran dropped his glasses and swung around as he heard a movement from behind. In his opinion, it was just about the unlikeliest day he had ever dreamed of spending—a nightmare. He saw that the sound had

warned him just in time. Twenty yards behind, and advancing in a straight line like well ordered soldiery, came a brow, gleaming mass of six-inch ants!

Scouts were out ahead of them. Others, larger and differently colored, came lightly in advance of each flanking column, like officers in charge of troops. The undergrowth on either side rustled and whispered with an encircling flank attack.

"GET down to that dry river!" snapped Halloran. "Start running, Professor!"

He threw a dynamite stick straight at that main, advancing army. It took all his courage to stand still, half-crouching, and fling a couple of sticks into the undergrowth on either side, before he whirled round and grabbed the little scientist and ran frantically for the valley.

Three roaring crashes filled the air, their deafening impacts coming quickly after each other. Columns of smoke arose, and there was a curious high-pitched aftermath which seemed like squealings of myriad tiny voices.

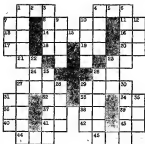
But Halloran was not waiting for anything more. Their retreat was cut off. The only possible safety lay in the river bed, clear of surrounding undergrowth. From there it would be possible to take stock of things.

As he ran, Halloran saw one of the giant anti-hills, no more than fifty feet away from him to his right. He saw the frantic activity of the creatures on its galleries; evidently signaling news of the strange explosive attack. He grabbed one of his dynamite sticks as he ran, and slung it with all his might. There was another crash. The smoke cleared, and the towering hill was no more. Then, panting heavily, he and the professor were in the center of the hot, dusty river bed. Behind them was the hundred foot drop of the dried-up falls. Those dried-up waterfalls were only a few feet from their backs as Halloran pulled out another stick and slung it. But his hand was slippery with perspiration. The stick caught awkwardly on the lip of the run.

"Look out," howled Halloran, grabbing the professor and bringing him
(Continued on Page 129)

SCIENTIFIC CROSSWORD PUZZLE

©
This
Issue
We
Present
a
Brand-New
Type of
Puzzle—
the
Answers
Are to Be
Given
in
Numerals,
Not
Letters!



HORIZONTAL

1. The first three integral numbers.
2. Days in a sidereal year.
3. Hours in a civil day.
4. Radius of Saturn's orbit its radius of orbit.
5. Elements in the periodic table.
6. Number of moons in the Solar System.
7. Atomic number of Deuterium.
8. Pi to the nearest millionth.
9. Square in a nine-square.
10. Mendeleev's number for Selenium.
11. Unit of focus of lens.
12. Focus of an isosceles triangle.
13. The same wine on this, if you're playing cards.
14. Lunar revolutions per solar year.
15. Degrees in a solidus sign.
16. Month in a Georgian year.
17. Distance a body falls the first second.
18. Common logarithm of 20.
19. First year of the 19th Century.
20. Complement of 60.
21. Length of meridian circle.
22. Fifth power of two.
23. Seconds in one hour nearest hundred.
24. Angle of equilateral triangle.
25. Atomic number of Iron (atomic mass 56).

26. Surface gravity of Mars, percentage of g .
27. Name of common logarithm (Briggsian).
28. Quarter circle.
29. Inclination of the ecliptic, nearest degree.
30. Distance of Neptune per hour.
31. Height of Torricelli's column of Mercury, cm.
32. Trigonometric of a straight angle.
33. Standard pressure in millimeters.

VERTICAL

1. Coefficients of $\ln-pH$.
2. Inches in a meter, nearest hundredth.
3. Distance in light-years of a star whose parallax is 100 seconds.
4. Number of feet in ten miles.
5. Melting point of frozen water, "Celsius."
6. Seconds in 4 1/2 minutes.
7. Light-years in 20 parsecs.
8. Fahrenheit reading at 32° C.
9. Perimeter of circle whose radius is 10.
10. Degrees in a complete circle.
11. Name of natural logarithm (Napierian).
12. Increasing decimal of 50 (one-currency).
13. Five Earth-diameters.
14. Diameter of Luna, miles.
15. Cube of eleven.
16. Days in 2 sidereal cycles (astronomical).
17. Height of Luyten's 2 Main-sequence.
18. Dr. E. Rutherford's Magic Bullet.

The answer is on page 129—if you *MUST* look!



GET ready to embark on the most amazing excursion of all time! A thrill-a-minute journey that begins ten thousand centuries ago and rockets you into the wonderland of tomorrow. It's a fascinating, one-way three-hour we're offering you . . . a breathless non-stop trip from the prehistoric eras of yesterday to the unknown vistas of the future!

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REVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Suppose an inquiring reporter from the staff of **STANTLING STORIES** dropped around to see you, asking for the name of the best science fiction story you ever read. Making that choice would require plenty of consideration. Certainly the pages of literary literature have seen many excellent tales, all distinctive enough so to be remembered throughout the years.

For the past two years, in our **HALL OF FAME** department, we have been publishing gems by the masters of yesterday. These stories were but a few of the many brilliant classics that helped make science fiction what it is today, the most intriguing form of fiction in contemporary literature.

Beginning with the next issue, we are inaugurating a new procedure regarding the selection of stories for this department—

innovation that will bring you the six greatest stories of all time!

In a special questionnaire submitted to six of science fiction's most outstanding followers, men who have read every story published in the last decade, we have invited each of them to recommend the one story they consider the best of all time!

Mr. Sam Moskowitz, well-known literary fan, has chosen **THE MAN WHO EVOLVED**, by Edmond Hamilton, as the story he deems the best of all the thousands he has read. We will publish that yarn in the next issue, with an editorial by Mr. Moskowitz telling why that story is his favorite.

Watch forthcoming issues of **SS** for a revival of the **Fittest!** Five other well-known fans will be represented with their selections. In the meanwhile, send us your list of the best ten, and we have many of your suggestions listed on our history list parallel!

A CROSS-NUMBER PUZZLE!

How many miles are there in a light year? How far is the distance from the Earth to the Sun? What is the value of pi? If you can answer these numerical questions, and others of the same variety, then try this issue's **Scientific Crossword Puzzle**. Here, for the first time in the history of any publication, we offer a puzzle based entirely on mathematics. So give us the right numbers, please!

And, if you say the word, forthcoming puzzles will be based on the various sciences. Astronomy, geology, biology, etc. Let's have your comment.

A GALA ISSUE!

Many distinctive stories by star writers in the November issue of **STANTLING STORIES!** More **THRILLS IN SCIENCE** Jack Binder portrays the life of Sir William Perkin, famous chemist, as he discovers aniline. **THEY CHANGED THE WORLD**. Ace Brown, famous and fact in the literary magazine that leads the field!

THEY VIBRATE—with the letters sent to by loyal deliveries of science fiction. Add your votes! This department is a reader forum devoted to your criticism, suggestions, and comments—and we've pleasure in hear from you. Remember, take in **YOUR** magazine and it pleased to **SEND** all your suggestions. Let us know what stories and departments you like—what you'd like to see with you. A special welcome to a book—your right up and we'll print as many of your letters as possible. We cannot undertake to cover help. Write us, **STANTLING STORIES**, 22 West 46th St., New York, N. Y.

(Continued from Page 121)

"There" by Manly Wade Wellman in the last and smallest story I have read.—1612 First Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

MANLY'S MASTERPIECE

By D. B. Thompson

Well, here I sit with the May of March still two days away, looking out the window at the picture of new babies and the picture of old ones. Manly Wade Wellman's "There" does the trick.

And speaking of that Manly Wade Wellman has produced a masterpiece in "There in Texas." The story is very, very cleverly done. The strange happenings there and there throughout the story, yet I'd never met the children (Manly's son, Thompson) with something to show before the last page was read. Manly's illustrations are remarkable work.

"There" (Manly's son, Thompson) is an excellent story and Manly Wade Wellman's masterpiece in the "There in Texas" story.

"There in Texas" seems as good as it did at first reading—and there are enough little things around to let it and so. "A Manly Wade Wellman" is a story that seems that I don't know what to say about it.

I wish the Old Man (Manly's only outstanding masterpiece) author (Mr. Manly) still had time to stay, as he was one of my favorites in the story. Manly's story did not seem to be a masterpiece and I am in Manly's opinion.

It is in the May—1612 "Q" Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

By Art R. Schert

I wrote you once before suggesting a "There" novel for you—I called it "There"—and May story was a masterpiece.

"There" (Manly's son, Thompson) is a masterpiece—well, it is a masterpiece, because that I have to praise it enough. The story is a masterpiece and the story is a masterpiece. I wish the Old Man (Manly's only outstanding masterpiece) author (Mr. Manly) still had time to stay, as he was one of my favorites in the story. Manly's story did not seem to be a masterpiece and I am in Manly's opinion.

READERS PICK 'EM FROM NOW ON!

By Alfred Edward Maxwell

My masterpiece in "There" (Manly's son, Thompson) is a masterpiece—well, it is a masterpiece, because that I have to praise it enough. The story is a masterpiece and the story is a masterpiece. I wish the Old Man (Manly's only outstanding masterpiece) author (Mr. Manly) still had time to stay, as he was one of my favorites in the story. Manly's story did not seem to be a masterpiece and I am in Manly's opinion.

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GOING IN FOR ART

By Charles Hilkey

Attention I realize it may seem as a pretty broad statement, but when we read of "There" (Manly's son, Thompson) is a masterpiece—well, it is a masterpiece, because that I have to praise it enough. The story is a masterpiece and the story is a masterpiece. I wish the Old Man (Manly's only outstanding masterpiece) author (Mr. Manly) still had time to stay, as he was one of my favorites in the story. Manly's story did not seem to be a masterpiece and I am in Manly's opinion.

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Spand on Trial: Spand's answers, following today's oral argument, suggested anxiety, despite his confident air. At the end of the trial, he seemed to relax, talk and smile. Judge Warren, however, did not change course—because of indications "We believe the defendant and family, who could prosecute."

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STARDUST, 2800 Argyle St., Chicago, Ill.
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 Jack Chester S. Geler, Paul Quilley, How-
 ard Frank, Harry Warren, Jr., and Herschel
 Lockwood, Jr.

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SPACEWAYS, 333 Bryn Mawr Place, Hagerstown, Maryland. Edited by Harry Warner Jr., James E. Arvey, and Walter E. Marco

Strong, informal law departments and solid
throughout the country. Strong law departments in
the country for many "strong" years and
solid and stable of the time. Her first few
years the bill with solid law officers. Her
and others are.

GOLDEN ATOM. 48 Lewis Street, Rochester, New York. Edited by Larry B. Farnum, Edward A. Sanford.

English home of the San-Diego Post it is far from big-name. Contributors include Norman Hemmick, F. Schuyler Miller, Clark Ashton Smith, Jeff MacGregor, and others. Interest for articles is far from keen, however. Editor of San Diego Post told why he never sent the world since several years ago. Amazing!

POLARIS, 404 E. Lake Ave., Pasadena
 Calif. Edited by Paul Freyberger.

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THE COMET. R.F.D. 1, Box 126, Northridge, California. Edited by Tom Wright
1-1-1968

Two-bearing normal, well-sorted and lithomorphous to thin north-south, beds composed of many thin, brown, fine-grained, and somewhat on the level of sandy sand and gravel.

SCIENTI-COMICS, 224 W. 5th St., New York, N.Y. Edited by Philip Newman.

And here we have the top in something of a new class, the name of "Tiger Team," in which the U.S. Navy is leading. Still, it's not a new class, it's a new team.

THE M.E.A. BULLETIN Published by
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KINGDOM OF THE ANTS

(Continued from Page A31)

Figure 1 consists of four bar charts labeled (a) through (d), each showing the percentage of respondents for different age groups across various demographic categories. The age groups on the x-axis are 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. The y-axis represents the percentage of respondents, ranging from 0% to 100%.

- (a) Gender:** Shows the percentage of respondents for each age group, categorized by gender (Male and Female).
- (b) Education:** Shows the percentage of respondents for each age group, categorized by education level (High School, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate).
- (c) Income:** Shows the percentage of respondents for each age group, categorized by income level (Low, Middle, High).
- (d) Employment status:** Shows the percentage of respondents for each age group, categorized by employment status (Full-time, Part-time, Unemployed, Retired).

The stick whirled ten feet only or so through the air before dropping. Then the crash came. MacDonald had the impression that he was literally being blown to pieces. Half the clothes were torn from his back, and he was lifted clear of the ground.

Instinctively he clung to the professor's body—and then in a mighty roar, as of a sudden thunder, he felt them both falling, and knew that an avalanche down the falls had already started.

Thunder was still filling Olive Holman's ears when he awoke. But it was the thunder of airplane engines running at full throttle outside a glass-windowed compartment. He could not believe it. It was difficult to believe, even when a man in an Australian Airways' uniform bent over him and explained

"Feeling better?" inquired the air-

"Thank heaven!" Halloran said, and drew a deep, shuddering breath.

"Mr. Channing insisted that we come and look for you," said the airman. "Good job we did, too. Spotted you carrying your pul along a dried-up river bed, with forest fires raging all around you, over a distance of miles. Never seen such a place. It was that which attracted us to the spot. Luckily the river bed gave us clear enough space for landing and takeoff. Shows how a strain affects a man's mind—you were yammering about ants a foot long that could talk."

It was a week later that Halloran was carried into a Melbourne hospital, and it was five weeks after that before the hospital authorities told him that his nervous system was once again in perfect order. That was the first time, too, that they would let him see the one good photograph that had been taken from a badly-smashed camera. It was the photograph of an ant, on the top of an ant-hill.

"Queer blokes, you scientists," said the doctor who showed it to him. "Fancy going through all that for an

BEST FUN, FICTION AND FOTOS M

ordinary blinking insect no longer than your thumbnail."

"No longer?" snapped Halloran. "That creature was a foot—"

He stopped suddenly. There was nothing by which to compare the size of the ant-hill or the ant. The background was just the distant clouds. And he remembered that the hospital authorities had always talked soothingly when he spoke about giant ants. Now he wanted to get out and about. He didn't want them to think him crazy.

"Well, I'm all right now," he said. "I can go today, can't I?"

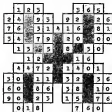
"Yes, you've forgotten your funny tales now, Halloran," the doctor said. "No more ants like elephants."

"And the professor?" asked Halloran. "You haven't told me much about him. How is that plucky little human wonder?"

"We didn't tell you before, Halloran," the doctor said simply. "He was buried up country at Clontarrey. When the search party found you . . . well, old boy, you were staggering along, carrying a man who had been dead for a couple of days and more! It was fine work, Halloran. I'm sorry."

Halloran shook hands in silence, took his hat, and walked out of the hospital.

Answer to Puzzle on Page 119



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